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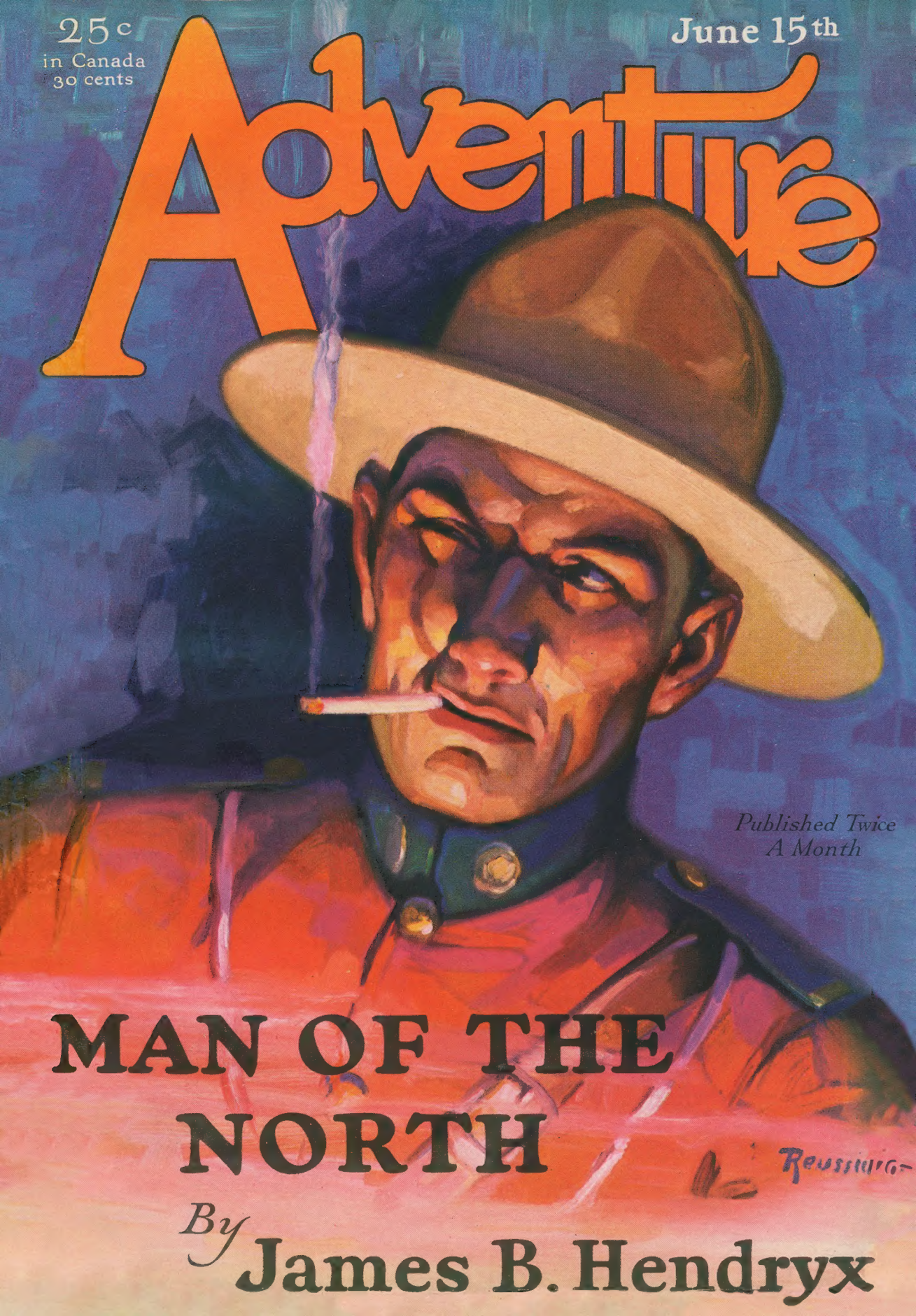

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By James B. Hendryx

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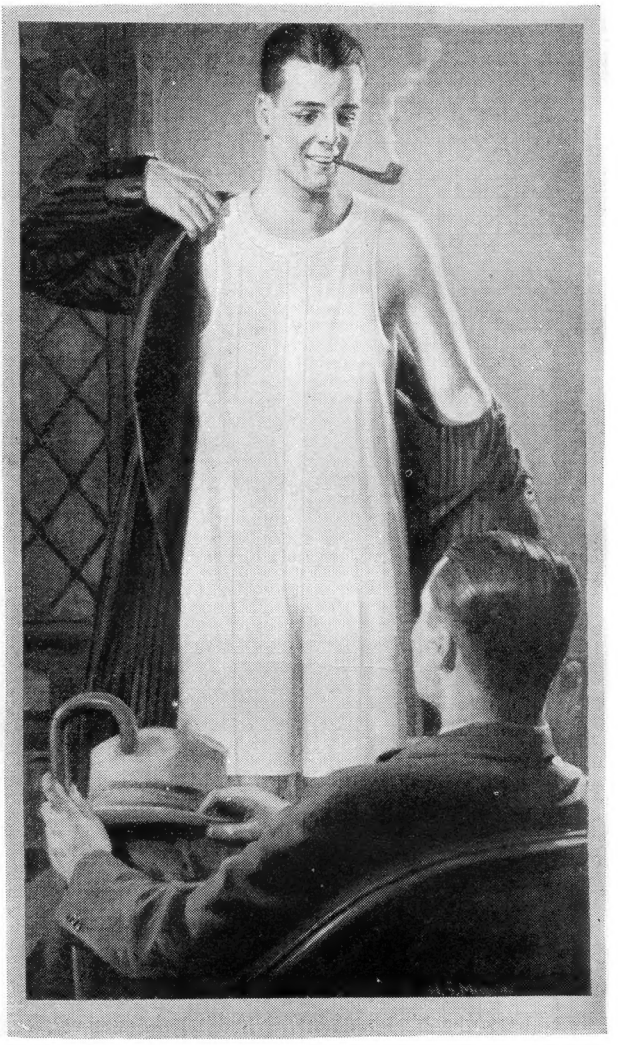

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BEGINNING

A Stirring Novel of the Northwest Canadian Waterways and a True Son of the Wilderness

By

JAMES B. HENDRYX

MAN *of the*

CHAPTER I

ON THE RIVER

BRIAN O'NEILL took a long draught of black tea, stretched lazily, and filled his lungs deeply with the spruce scented air. It was good to be alive—alive, and young, and footloose! Aspen leaves danced above him in the light breeze and made shimmering patterns on the warm earth. The droning hum of countless mosquitoes blended into the muffled roar of the mighty rapid above whose leaping white-water hung a halo of rainbow mist.

An eddying breeze sprinkled him with the white ash of his tiny wood fire, and blue smoke stung his nostrils. It was the North—his North—and he loved it. The North in a gentle mood, a benevolent, tolerant North, the cradle for a million younglings. But Brian knew his North in her other moods—the unyielding, indomitable North that destroys men for the mistakes they make—a lost ax, a broken paddle, the want of a match, rotten ice, jagged rocks concealed beneath foaming white-water . . . The mocking, relentless North that kills mercifully in her howling blizzards with the stupor of her strong cold; or horribly—slowly—with the silent death grip of her muskegs and her quicksands.

Born north of 60°, the nineteen years of Brian O'Neill's life had been lived in the land of the lakes and the rivers. The

NORTH

three great rivers, the Mackenzie, the Slave and the Athabasca, had been his playground. He knew the North as few men ever know it. He had left the ashes of his little fires upon the banks of a hundred unnamed lakes, his canoe had traced unmapped rivers to their sources, and his dogs had won through blizzards upon barrens that no other white man had ever crossed. Always he had followed the lure of the "just beyond." What lay behind that next ridge? What would one more bend of the river show?

There were times when necessity forced him to seek employment. One must eat to live. Ammunition, fish nets and gear may not be picked up on the banks of far rivers. At such times he was a welcome addition to any post or camp along the rivers, for no factor or trader from the Landing to McPherson but knew that Brian O'Neill could do anything from the trading and grading of fur to running a scow brigade the length of the three rivers.

Field officers of the great fur companies knew his worth, and time and again had offered him positions of permanence and

responsibility. But always the lad turned them down. He was his own man. He would work just so long as necessity required him to work, and not one moment longer. It was beautifully simple, this scheme of existence. When he had earned enough for his present requirements he would ask for his time. Disappointed factors might argue, and irate ones curse, but all to no purpose. Impervious alike to argument and curses, Brian would hear them out, collect his pay, purchase his supplies, load his outfit into his canoe, and with a smile and a wave of the hand head for God knows where.

"A smart lad, but a ne'er-do-weel," agreed thrifty Scot factors when the name of Brian O'Neill was mentioned upon the rivers.

It was this need of purchase that had brought him to the upper Athabasca. He must have a new rifle—not one of the trade guns of the lower posts, but a weapon of high power and flat trajectory such as one might find in Edmonton. It had been his intention to obtain work from Haldane, at the Landing, but Haldane had been removed and another had taken his place—a man to whom the name of Brian O'Neill meant nothing, else he would straightway have discharged three or four half drunken breeds and given him place.

Refused work, he had offered his services as guide to an oil prospector who was loading two scows with equipment.

"Don't need no guide," replied the man. "Hell! Them scows couldn't get off the river if they wanted to. An' besides, these boys have be'n up an' down the river a hundred times."

Brian's glance rested in amusement upon the pleasantly soused breeds.

"How much you want?" demanded the man, and when he haggled over the wage, Brian promptly turned on his heel and walked away.

Stepping into his canoe, he pushed into the current and headed for Fort McMurray, two hundred and fifty miles to the northward. At McMurray he would be welcomed and could work as long as he chose. What mattered that he would have to return upriver to purchase the coveted rifle? The North is patient, and Brian O'Neill was of the North.

His journey toward McMurray was unhurried. At the head of a white-water rapid he cached his canoe and, striking out on foot, explored a creek from whose banks an Indian had told him oil oozed in such quantity as to render the water unfit to drink. He found the creek similar to a dozen others he had seen in the tar sands district, and so returned to the river and carried his canoe to the water's edge. As is the way of the North, he brewed a pot of tea before continuing his journey to McMurray.

It was thus as he sat in the pleasant shade of the aspens, his eyes on the rainbow mist that his thoughts drifted hither and yon. Were they right—the factors and the Company men who called him a ne'er-do-well because he refused to settle down to the routine of the posts—the drying of whitefish, the barter with the natives, and the baling of stinking fur? What was the end of it all? What did it get them? He thought of his father, old Kelly O'Neill, known for years as one of the best factors on the rivers, retired now to his bit of a farm on the Clearwater. Contentment? Yes, his father and mother were happy and contented in their declining years. The Company pension and the farm, with the work not overly hard, had taken care of that.

Old Kelly O'Neill, with his books and his homely philosophy of life, was loved and respected the length of the three rivers. Men often called at the log house on the Clearwater to seek his counsel. Company men, and men of the Mounted Police. And, because Kelly O'Neill was a man of understanding and of judgment, these went their way the wiser, the advice they received the more lasting and the more piquant because more often than not it was found hidden in intricate parables, or abstract observations seemingly rambling and irrelevant.

THE LAD smiled as he remembered that many of the factors, though they envied old Kelly his lot, pitied him for his ne'er-do-well son. But for Brian contentment could only come in roaming his wilderness unfettered by the restrictions of either post or farm.

The factors were wrong. But was he himself right? What was his wilderness roving getting him? Certainly nothing in the way of worldly goods. Knowledge? Education? Would he not do better to heed the veiled hints of Kelly O'Neill, and the more direct admonitions of the good Father Giroux and apply himself to his books? Brian frowned. Books! It was not that he was uninterested in books, nor that he disliked study. All his life he had been an intermittent student at the Mission, scorning curriculum, coming and going as he liked, delving here and there into subjects that interested him. But of what use was book learning to one who always had lived in the North, and who always would live in the North? Knowledge to Brian O'Neill meant knowledge of the North. Such knowledge must be gained at first hand—not read from the pages of books. See the North, explore it, fight it—live it! So, and only so, could one know the Great Land of Snows.

A light frown clouded his brow as vague doubt assailed him. There were things one did not understand; this oil, for instance. Where was it formed, and how? Were there inexhaustible reservoirs far beneath the surface? Would men succeed in tapping these reservoirs and thereby reap a golden harvest? Already men were appearing upon the rivers with ponderous machinery, boring, prospecting for oil. A railroad was headed for Fort McMurray, it was even now completed as far as LaBiche. He had heard men talk wisely of tar sands, of asphaltum, of petroleum and of gas. He had listened to conjectures regarding ancient basins, tilted and drained. What did these men know of what was taking place far below the surface of the earth, much less of what had taken place millions of years ago? Even the Government did not know. Look at the oil well that had been drilled years ago by the Government at Pelican Portage, and had produced only gas that had been burning ever since Brian could remember, with a roar that could be heard for miles. They had found no oil; and of what use was gas that roared from a spout and shot a pillar of fire forty feet into the air? Manifestly the knowledge these men possessed was of no value, for they were exploiting the oil fields to make money—and none as yet had made any money.

As Brian was honest with others, so was he honest with himself. He knew that his professed scorn of book knowledge was more or less a pose adopted for the benefit of Kelly O'Neill and the good Father Giroux. That it deceived neither he did not know. Brian O'Neill was young. He did know, however, that neither had advised his settling down at post or farm, and for these two men the lad's respect amounted almost to reverence. He chuckled, as he refilled his cup with strong black tea, at remembrance of the bit of banter he had got from his father upon his latest visit to the farm:

"Chasin' the horizon is a fine thing, son. When ye come up wid ut, leave me know what lies beyant. In the meantime I'll read what they say in the books."

"Good old Kelly!" breathed the lad, aloud. "He's the best dad a fellow ever had. He understands!"

Abruptly his gaze focused upon two black dots that appeared around a far bend of the river. Deliberately he set the tea cup upon the ground and, picking up his binoculars, scrutinized the objects minutely.

"The oil man that was at the Landing," he muttered, as the scows drifted rapidly toward him down the fast water. Suddenly his muscles tensed. "What the—the fools!"

The foremost scow, several hundred yards in advance of the other, was sweeping to the right of a small rocky island, heading down the heavy water straight

for the brink of the rock ribbed falls. Too late the crew of six realized their peril. Dropping the sweeps, they rushed helplessly from one side to the other, pointing, gesticulating wildly.

Seeing the plight of their fellows, those on the second scow, by frantic work at the heavy oars and the long steering sweep, managed to land at the head of the little island, where they leaped ashore and stared in horror at the doomed scow which swung end for end as it struck against a submerged rock, floated loose and struck again.

Brian O'Neill was already in his canoe. Taking skillful advantage of an eddy, he made for the head of the island, his paddle flashing wetly in the sunshine.

The North kills men for the mistakes they make. The tiger had unsheathed her claws.

CHAPTER II

BRIAN GETS A JOB

THE HEAVILY loaded scow had hung up on the rock ledge over which the river plunged for a sheer drop of eight or ten feet into a smother of rock studded white-water, through which nothing could pass and live. Destruction momentarily threatened the fifty-five foot craft, a third of which overhung the lip of the fall. The six breeds who constituted her crew had crowded into the upriver end where they stood, helplessly waving their arms and shouting appeals that were drowned in the roar of the rapid. And stumbling up and down the shore of the tiny island, scarce two hundred feet away, the crew of the second scow was shouting as futilely as were their unfortunate companions.

As Brian O'Neill stepped from his canoe into this chaos of inefficiency his arm was seized by the owner of the outfit, more abjectly helpless, if possible, than the breeds.

"Can't you get them men off? Ain't there nothin' we can do?" he gibbered, pointing a shaking finger toward the precariously balanced scow. "They'll go over in a minute! Fer God's sake! Give you fifty dollars if you can! I'll make it a hundred!"

"Got a line?" asked Brian, shaking loose from the clutching fingers and carefully measuring the distance with his eye.

"Sure—got plenty line. What kind of line you want?" He charged among the excited breeds. "Hey, you! Hey you! Quit jumpin' around like a hen with his head cut off! Git back there an' git out some line!"

As two or three of the breeds started for the beached scow, Brian called after them:

"It'll take two hundred—yes—two hundred and fifty feet. I want a light line for the canoe. And break out a heavy one, too. We'll try to hold the scow where she is. I can't take 'em all off at once, and the others may go on over when the first ones leave her. Maybe it's only their weight that's holding her where she is. Step lively, boys," he added to the breeds, who had calmed perceptibly when they recognized Brian O'Neill.

The lines were produced and, selecting a large rock near the lower end of the island, Brian gave instruction for snubbing the heavy line when he had made the end fast to the scow. Fastening the light line to the canoe, he took the loose end of the heavy one with him and dropped down upon the balanced scow as the men on the island paid out the lines.

As the canoe drew nearer, the six breeds in the scow crowded and fought for place at the upper end. Realizing the danger if they should leap simultaneously into the frail craft, he signaled the island and the canoe came to a halt a dozen feet from the scow. He knew four of the breeds who crowded the rail and, shouting to make himself heard above the roar of the fall, he called them by name:

"You, Alex, and Tom Shirts, and Louis, I'll take you this trip; then we'll let the canoe down for the others. But first

you've got to make this heavy line fast to the scow so they can snub her to the island. Mind, now—no crowding! I'll pass the line and you make her fast, then Tom, and Alex, and Louis slip into the canoe. You, Elisha, stay with the others till the canoe comes back for you. No fighting or shoving, or some one's going to get hurt."

Again Brian signaled, the canoe dropped down to the scow, and he passed the heavy line to eager hands. When it was made fast, those on shore heaved on it and secured it by a couple of bights around the big rock. Tom Shirts was already in the canoe, and Louis, a small man, was about to lower himself from the barge, when a huge breed, one of the two Brian did not know, seized the smaller man by the scruff and, hurling him back among the litter of oil gear that cluttered the scow, threw his leg over the rail and with an insolent leer, slipped into the canoe. The next moment he slumped limply against the scow, as the heel of Brian's iron shod canoe pole crashed against the side of his head. The canoe rocked perilously, and the man would have slipped into the water and been whirled over the falls had not Tom Shirts secured a firm grip on his collar.

"W'at I do?" cried the breed, with difficulty maintaining his grip as the canoe steadied herself with the inert form half in, half out of the water.

Without even a glance at the unconscious man whose face was red with blood that gushed from a long gash on his temple, Brian shrugged.

"Drop him in the river, or hoist him back on to the scow—it's all the same to me. He don't go this load."

Hands reached down, and the man was with difficulty dragged back aboard the scow, and in grave silence, Louis and Alex took their places in the canoe. It took the combined effort of those on the island to haul the light craft to safety. The empty canoe was dropped back to the scow, the unconscious man was lowered into her, the other two followed, and soon all were safe on the island.

THE OIL MAN counted a handful of bills which he extended toward Brian.

"Here's your pay," he said grudgingly. "You earned it."

"Go to hell!" said the younger man evenly. "I don't take money for a thing like that."

Pocketing his bills, the man eyed his doomed scow ruefully.

"There ain't no way to save her, I s'pose. God, I hate to lose her. There's better than two thousand dollars' worth of oil rig in that scow. I can't do no drillin' without I replace it." He paused and regarded Brian closely. "Say, ain't you the feller I tried to hire upriver fer a guide?"

"I'm the fellow you *didn't* try to hire," answered Brian, meeting the gaze squarely. "You said you didn't need a guide. Said these boys knew the river. And, when I asked six dollars a day, you said it was too much. If you'd hired me your scow wouldn't be where it is."

"Six a day's too much. You ain't nothin' but a kid."

Brian shrugged and stepped toward his canoe.

The other followed him to the water's edge.

"I s'pose she'd break all to hell if she went on through," he speculated, his eyes on the long reach of white-water.

"There wouldn't be enough left of her to light a fire with."

"You couldn't figger no way to save her?" he persisted.

"Yes, I could save her."

The man's look of astonishment gave way to a gleam of hope.

"You could? Tell you what I'll do—you git that scow off, an' I'll hire you fer the balance of the trip."

"I'll tie that scow up here on the island beside the other for a hundred dollars. It ought to be worth a hundred to save two thousand, besides the time you'd lose. I don't feel the same way about scows that I do about men."

The man hesitated as his glance took in the scow, the little rocky island, the

heavy line, the breeds grouped near the center of the island shamelessly passing black bottles back and forth. Evidently no idea for the salvaging of his own property occurred to him, for he turned again to Brian.

"How in the hell do you figger on workin' it?" he asked. "It took the half of us to pull that little canoe up ag'in the current with the four of you in it."

"Is it a deal?"

"Yes, damn it—it's a deal! If you can get that scow back up here it's worth the hundred to find out how you do it."

Taking Tom Shirts with him, Brian paddled ashore and, cutting a couple of spruce trees, towed them back to the island. With these, and some chain and wire line that he found in the scow, he rigged a Spanish windlass, and with all hands on the capstan, the scow was hauled slowly back to the island.

"'Course, it was my chains an' line you used, an' my crew," ventured the man, as he counted the money. "I'd ought, by rights, to charge you up with them men's time."

"It wasn't time you needed," answered Brian. "It was brains. If you'd had any of your own you wouldn't have had to buy mine."

"You're pretty cocky, ain't you," growled the other, as he handed over the money. "But I ain't the one to haggle over a few dollars. Is there any more bad water between here an' McKay?"

"You haven't seen any bad water yet. Yes, there's plenty more ahead."

The man stared out over the rapids.

"I s'pose I've got to hire you at six a day fer the balance of the trip."

"Ten a day."

"Ten! You said six, upriver!"

"Yes, but that was several days ago. It'll cost you more now."

"It ain't worth it! I won't pay no such wages! You can't hold me up!"

Brian laid hold of his canoe and, remembering the lad's abrupt departure at the Landing, the man capitulated.

"Hold on! Damn it! If I got to, I got to! I can't afford to lose no scow."

"All right," answered Brian. "I'll take your outfit down. But first I've got to go to Edmonton."

"Edmonton!" cried the man. "What d'you mean—Edmonton? It'll take you a week! D'you think I'm goin' to hang up on this here rock pile in the middle of the river fer a week while you go kihootin' off to Edmonton?"

Brian shrugged.

"Do as you please," he said. "Wait here—go ashore and wait—or try to get to McKay without me. You tried once. Maybe you'll have better luck next time. It's all the same to me."

"Looka here. Time's money to me. The quicker I get to McKay, the quicker I can start drillin'. The summer ain't none too long up in this Godforsaken country, nohow, they say. Why didn't you go to Edmonton when you was upriver, if you're so hell bent to go?"

"I had no money, then. I need a rifle—a better gun than can be bought at the posts—"

"A rifle! What kind of a rifle? I got a rifle—brother-in-law give it to me, said I might get a shot at a bear or a moose, or somethin'. But I ain't no hand to hunt. He claimed it was a good one."

"Let me see it. If it is what I want I'll buy it, if you care to sell."

"Sure, I'll sell it, if I can save a week's time. I won't git no time to hunt nohow."

THE MAN went to the scow and returned with the rifle and several boxes of ammunition. It was a beauty, of a make and pattern of which Brian often had dreamed, and had hoped some day to own. The caliber, too, was right. Evidently the brother-in-law of the oil man was a connoisseur of guns.

"What will you take for it?" asked the lad.

"What'll you give me?" parried the man. "I don't know nothin' about rifles. Looks like it ought to be worth around fifty dollars."

"It's worth more than that," said

Brian. "I'll give you the hundred you just paid me—and, at that, I'm getting a bargain."

The man stared.

"Well—I'll tell the world you're honest, anyway! Fork over the change. The gun's yourn. An' I'll throw in the shells."

Methodically, Brian counted out some bills which he handed over.

"Hey, there's only forty dollars here!" cried the man.

"Yes," answered Brian, returning the remaining bills to his pocket. "The sixty is mine. It will take six days to tie this outfit up at McKay."

The man flushed hotly.

"Collectin' your pay in advance, eh? How do I know you'll stick through to McKay?"

"You don't. But I do."

Despite his annoyance the man grinned.

"I'm bettin' you will, at that. I kind of like your way of goin' at things, now I've got used to it. Anyway, I'll breathe a damn' sight easier than what I have be'n. I ain't had nothin' but trouble ever since I first seen the river. How we goin' to git the scows offen this island?"

Brian indicated the left hand channel.

"We'll track line 'em around those rocks and shove into an eddy that will slant us across the river. The channel is on the other side. Your Injuns would have known enough to hold to the other bank if they hadn't been too drunk to notice where they were."

At mention of his crew the man scowled and bellowed an order:

"Hey, you, git to work an' stow them chains an' lines!" He turned to Brian with a growl of disgust. "Laziest, good-fer-nothin'est crowd I ever seen. When they ain't swizzlin' rotgut, they're ashore guzzlin' tea! An' eat! Damndest hogs goin'! Four, five meals a day, an' believe me, they take their time about 'em! What with sixteen, eighteen hours of daylight, I bet we ain't averaged over two hours a day on the river!"

Brian grinned.

"Better let me handle them," he advised. "I can just about double your running time. They'll drink no more whisky. They'll still drink plenty of tea, and eat their four or five meals. It's their way. No one can change them. They've been doing it that way for two hundred and fifty years."

"You're welcome to the job," answered the man, a note of respect in his voice. "A man finds out sometimes that he's got a hell of a lot to learn. But how you goin' to cut down on the booze? They'll all quit."

Brian shook his head.

"They won't quit. They saw that you were new to the country and they took advantage of you. Always they are permitted to stay reasonably soused during the loading of the scows. But, once on the river, tea takes the place of whisky. They won't quit, because they know that I know that."

Turning abruptly away, he walked toward the breeds who had paid not the slightest heed to the bellowed command of the oil man. Tom Shirts and the man called Elisha arose as he approached; the others remained squatted upon the ground. Half a dozen bottles, partially emptied of their contents, stood among the stones. Brian halted beside the group and in silence allowed his glance to rest for an appreciable moment upon each upturned face. Then he tapped his chest lightly with his forefinger.

"I am running this outfit down to McKay. Me—Brian O'Neill—I'm boss."

Pausing to let the information soak in, he stepped among them and one by one picked up the bottles and smashed them against the rocks. With the last bottle shattered, he spoke again:

"Go get the rest of it. Every bottle."

THE FOUR Brian had called by name, together with the crew of the second scow, rummaged among their effects and returned with two or three bottles apiece.

"Smash 'em," ordered Brian, and when the men complied, he turned to the other two. "Where's your whisky?" he demanded.

The smaller man backed away a step.

"Me, A'm ain' got no wheesky."

"You lie," answered Brian quietly. "And when I find it I'm going to smash the bottles over your head."

He turned to the big breed who had attempted to board the canoe out of turn. The man sat propped against a stone, blinking groggily, and holding a filthy rag to his head. Brian stooped over him.

"Take that rag away," he ordered, and when the man gingerly lowered it, Brian examined the wound. "Got to take a few stitches," he said. "Next time you'll do as I say."

Stepping to his canoe, he returned with a waterproof sealskin bag which he opened and set beside him upon a flat rock. Selecting a clean cloth, he wet it in the river and approached the breed, who drew back, muttering surlily. Brian smiled.

"Must do. Fix all up. Hurt a little. Good medicine. After while no much sore." And when the man still protested, he turned to Tom Shirts and the others. "Throw him on his back and hold him. Twist his head around so I can fix him up. No time to fool. Dirty rag much poison—maybe-so die."

The breeds obeyed without question, four of them holding the man despite his furious struggles while Brian cleansed the wound. At the first prick of the needle, the man's struggles redoubled so that the combined effort of the four was insufficient to hold him still until Brian calmly knelt upon his throat, cutting off his wind until the ordeal was over. Liberal application of iodine and a neat bandage completed the operation, and Brian turned to see the man who had denied having any liquor standing at his elbow holding three quart bottles in his hands. He extended the bottles.

"Me—A'm nem Simon Peter LaRue. A'm ain' t'ink A'm lie to you no more. A'm ain' t'ink A'm like git my head bus'."

Brian grinned as he smashed the bottles.

"All right, old-timer. We'll get along, now. But you better tell your friend here to come clean with his whisky too, or I'll split the other side of his head."

"She nem St. Chrysostom. She ain' dreenk no wheesky. Dat mak' um seek on de belly. She try dat 'bout t'ousan' tam, but ever' tam she git so seek lak she die. Dat bad luck she ain' never kin git droonk, but de wheesky she ain' kin stay inside."

"Tough luck," grinned Brian, "but you get to work and make tea, while the other boys stow the lines and chains, and bend a couple of track lines on the scows. We'll drop down eight or ten miles below the rapids and camp."

The men responded with alacrity, even the surly St. Chrysostom lending a hand in coiling the heavy line. An hour later, with Brian's canoe aboard, the scows were hauled around the head of the island and pushed into the current where they were soon in the grip of the eddy that carried them almost against the opposite bank. With four men in each scow at the huge twenty foot oars, and one at the steering sweep, Brian stood in the bow of the foremost scow and directed the course through the narrow channel that threaded the rapid, by pointing, first this way, then that, with his light canoe paddle.

That evening, as the two sat at their supper a little apart from the others, the oil man's glance fixed itself upon the river.

"A man's a damn' fool to try to bull his way through somethin' he don't know nothin' about. Look at this outfit, now—runnin' like clockwork—an' I didn't have nothin' but trouble from the start."

Brian nodded.

"A man should know the river before he tries to run scows down."

"But they all told me they did know the river."

"They've all been up and down the river, some of them a hundred times, but they don't know the river except in a general way. Not one of them has ever acted as a pilot. They're all right for loading and unloading, and to work at the oars and the sweeps. They're not hard to

handle if you know them. Patience—that's the main thing. Let them know you mean what you say, then don't say too much. You'll have no further trouble, now— Listen; they're singing."

CHAPTER III

THE NE'ER-DO-WELL

IT WAS toward evening of the sixth day after leaving the island that Brian O'Neill personally superintended the tying up of the scows at the McKay landing. He turned toward his canoe, which had been unloaded upon the bank of the river, to find the oil man waiting beside the little craft. The man awkwardly extended his hand:

"Shake," he said. "You done a damn' good job."

Brian took the proffered hand.

"Oh, we got here all right. I'm glad you're satisfied."

"It ain't so much the gettin' here. I know'd you'd do that when I seen how you went to work gittin' off them men, an' savin' that scow. An' I'm more'n satisfied, as fer as that goes. But it's the way you done it—showed me up to myself fer the fool I was back there at the Landin', thinkin' I knowed it all. I've be'n watchin' you pretty near every minute since you come paddlin' out to that island, an' there ain't be'n but damn' few minutes that I ain't learnt somethin'—kind of salted somethin' down fer future use, as the feller says. I've knocked around considerable down in Oklahomy, an' I reckon I know a man when I see one. What I'm a-gittin' at is this: If you'll stay along here with me, you kin name your own wages."

"But I know nothing about oil."

"Oil, hell! Who figgered you did know anything about oil? I know all about oil, an' there ain't so much to know. You git it, or you don't git it. But I know the game from settin' up the derrick to cappin' the well, or pullin' the casin' out of a dry one. You know the river, you know the natives, an' near as I can figger, you know every damn' thing that's worth knowin' about the country. My drillin' crew'll be comin' on in a week, an' I know that jest as soon as you pull out them damn' breeds is fixin' to go to hell on me. I won't even git my scows onloaded. While I'm out prospectin' fer a likely setup, they'll set around an' swizzle tea."

"How long would you want me?"

"Want you! I'll keep you all summer an' take you back to Oklahomy in the winter if you'll go. I'll take a chanct on you till I go broke, or make my million an' retire to watch the bangtails run."

"No," answered Brian. "I'm obliged to you, but I've got to be going."

"Goin'! Goin' where? There ain't no one goin' to pay you more wages than what I will."

"It isn't a question of wages. I'm not going to work for wages. I don't know where I am going. But I've got enough to outfit me for the summer, and I'm going some place I've never been before."

"Prospectin'?"

"Well, not exactly—just drifting along, exploring, seeing country that other people don't see. I only work long enough to get an outfit."

The other grinned.

"Sort of a hobo, eh?"

"Yes," laughed Brian. "A hobo of the outlands."

"Well, you better fergit it. It ain't gittin' you nothin'. Tell you what I'll do—I'll gamble with you. You throw in with me, an' we'll go pardners. I've got the leases an' the rig an' the savvy on the oil end. You've got nothin' but what's in under your hat. It means we work like hell, an' if we win we're settin' pretty. If we lose we're broke."

Brian shook his head.

"No, I couldn't settle down in one place. I want the excitement of—"

"Excitement! Reckon you'd find excitement enough not knowin' whether you was goin' to spend next winter in the poorhouse or on Broadway. You might make a million, or you might go broke."

"There wouldn't be any excitement for

me in that," said Brian. "I wouldn't know what to do with a million if I had it—and I've been broke so many times that it isn't even a hardship."

"What do you know about that? Well, I'll be damned! 'Course, if that's the way you look at it the oil game ain't fer you. Sorry, damned if I ain't. Don't know when I've took to a feller like I done to you. Well, so long, an' good luck. I've got to line up these here majesties an' see if they'll onload my scows tomorrow. I'll remember what you said about patience, an' prob'ly their mothers'll see about half of 'em in the fall. Look me up if I'm here when you drift back this way—or if I ain't I'll be somewheres down in Oklahomy, or Californy, or Texas. Wherever the stink of new oil begins to spread over the map you'll be pretty apt to find John B. Sween; that's me. Any one that ever seen an oil field knows John B. Sween. I've had my ups, when I flew higher'n a kite, an' my downs, when it looked like the hole I was in didn't have no bottom. Excitement—don't talk to me! I've et in Rector's, an' I've fought with the flies fer a free lunch that had ought to be'n swill!"

Brian laughed.

"I'd rather take mine in the back country," he said. "If a man has his rifle and his net he can eat just as well when he's broke as when he isn't. Good-by."

And, as he pushed out into the dusk of the broad river, he looked back to see John B. Sween still standing on the bank waving his hat.

BRIAN O'NEILL lay sprawled on a flat rock studying the map that lay spread out before him. Occasionally he made light pencil marks on the map. From time to time his gaze would wander to the buildings of Fort Chipewyan, or out across the lake in silent contemplation of the ever changing mirage. A shadow fell across the map, and he looked up into the smiling eyes of the pleasant faced, grizzled man who had paused beside him.

"Ever been in that country?" asked the man, squatting beside the lad and laying his forefinger upon the map at a point to the northward of Lake Athabasca where Brian had drawn a thin line with his pencil.

"No. That's why I'm going there now."

The twinkling gray eyes regarded the lad more closely.

"You're going there—alone?"

"Yes."

"May I ask what for?"

"Why, just to have a look at the country. Maybe I'll cross the height of land and drift North."

The older man smiled, and said—

"I'm afraid you won't find the map of much service."

"I know I won't. None of 'em are, except right along the big rivers and the shores of the lakes. That's why I want to see the country for myself. Take all these lakes and rivers that are dotted in; they may be there and they may not. If they are there, it's certain they're not like the map shows them. I've checked up on it too many times."

The man nodded gravely.

"That's true," he said. "The country's big, and we've got to do the best we can. Much of the interior is sketched in on conjecture, or the hearsay of Indians. For instance, here—" he indicated a point only a short distance to the northward of Black Bay—"we have reason to believe, lies a lake of considerable size. We even have the name—Tazin Lake—but we haven't got the lake—yet."

Brian regarded the man with interest.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Adams is my name, Seth Adams. I am at the moment chief of the Geological Survey of Canada. Part of my job is the making of maps. Do you live here—at Chipewyan?"

"No. I was born at Fort Norman when my father was factor there. I live anywhere, from the Landing to McPherson."

A battle royal broke loose nearby among a rabble of lean, fly tortured husky dogs, and when Brian's attention

returned to his map, the man was strolling leisurely in the direction of the Company buildings, pausing now and again to pick up a rock fragment which he would examine and toss to the ground.

"Making maps," muttered Brian to himself, as his eyes followed the tall figure. "That's a real job. And geological—that means rocks and the lay of the land."

In the trading room Seth Adams accosted Leith, the factor.

"There's a lad out here poring over a map. Says he's going to take a trip somewhere north of the lake. Says he's the son of a former factor at Fort Norman. Know anything about him?"

The big Scot puffed at his pipe and combed his red beard with his fingers.

"Aye. He's Brian O'Neill, oldest son of old Kelly O'Neill, as fine a mon as ever stud in shoe leather. 'Tis a pity he should ha' such a son."

"What's the matter with him—dissipated?"

"Nae, nae! The lad's clean as a dog's tooth. An' honest as the day. Smart, too, an' more's the pity. But he's a ne'er-do-weel, spends his time roamin' aboot the country instead of settlin' doon to work as any lad should. Wi' my own ears I heard McMurtchie offer him a post to run, but he wadna' take it. Losh! I was thirty-three when they gi' me a post to run, an' the lad's na' yet turned twenty!"

Adams smiled.

"How does he manage to finance these trips of his?"

"His gun an' his nets do most o' the financin'. The lad can live in a country that wad starve a wolf. But, now an' so often, when in need o' supplies, he'll work for a spell at some post, or on the river. But he calculates his need to the panny, an' when he has enough earned, he quits, whether or nae. Ye canna' call him lazy, for when he works he's worth any two men I know, or a half a dozen breeds—an' the country he roams ain't a lazy mon's country, as well ye'll know. He knows every one, white an' native, the length o' the rivers—an' every one likes him."

"I wonder if I could persuade him to accompany me downriver? I'm arranging to bring in a survey party, and if possible I'd rather use natives for axmen, chain-men and packers. Some one who knows the country and the natives as he does would be of great value to me."

"W-e-e-l," said Leith doubtfully, "ye might ask him. If he's in need o' an outfit he might be glad o' the job. If he ain't he'll na' work if ye offer him ten times his worth."

"I might put it up to him on the grounds that it would be a great accommodation to me."

" 'Twad do ye nae gude. No matter how much work's to be done, or how few to do it, he'll work only as his own necessity requires. But, mind ye, if ye really needed help, if ye was sick, or hurt, or in danger there'd be nae end to the work he'd do, or the time he'd put in to see ye through. Here he comes the noo. If he's needin' supplies, he'll be askin' me for a job. He never asks debt."

BRIAN entered the trading room and proceeded directly to the counter upon which he laid a penciled memorandum. He greeted the factor:

"How are you, Mr. Leith? Can I help you put this stuff up? I'd like to get started as soon as I can."

The old factor raised his eyes from the slip of paper.

"Wheer ye headin', lad?"

"Over north of the lake somewhere. Figure I'll cross the height of land and drift down some river and find out where I'll come out."

"Meester Adams an' I've be'n speakin' aboot ye. He's chief o' the government Geological Survey. He's bringin' a party in later fer explorin' an' mappin' the country, an' what not. Right noo he's on his way doonriver to gather a crew o' natives fer packers an' the like, an' he was wonderin' wad ye like to go wi' him, bein'

as I told him ye knew every mon, woman an' child along the rivers?"

Brian shook his head.

"No; I'm going over north of the lake. It's a place I've never been."

"Losh, lad!" cried the Scot, with a show of impatience. "Ye can go north o' the lake any time! An' what gude will it do ye when ye go there? Look at yer father, Kelly O'Neill, retired on the Company's pension an' livin' like a king, instead of which ye must be wastin' yer life roamin' aboot the country hither an' yon like a lost soul. Be a gude lad, the noo, an' go doonriver wi' Meester Adams. 'Twad be an' accommodation to him, the wages is gude, an' the when ye come back I can use ye the rest o' the summer, what wi' the fishin' an' all."

Brian laughed.

"I could have a post of my own if I wanted to stay on the rivers," he reminded. "And only a few days ago I was offered a half interest in an oil well. Let 'em keep their posts and their oil wells. Maybe, sometime—when I've seen all there is to see—I'll settle down, but not now."

Seth Adams interrupted:

"I think I understand, my boy. I think you're right, and in no immediate danger of settling down. However, if at any time you feel that you would like to join my party I shall be very glad to have you. I think there are things of interest to you that I could teach you, and I know that from you I could learn many things. In the meantime, if you should happen on to Tazin Lake I wish you'd sketch in its general shape and location. I would consider it a favor, for I feel sure we will meet again."

Adams was quick to note the gleam of mingled surprise and eagerness that leaped into the boy's eyes at his words—surprise at the openly expressed approval, and eagerness to be at the exploration of the unknown lake. Brian answered without hesitation:

"Sure, we'll meet again. And your lake, if I don't find it, it won't be there. I marked the place on the map where you said it ought to be, and I'll draw it in the best I can; and later on, if you're anywhere in the country, I'll find you." He turned abruptly on the factor. "Come on, Mr. Leith, let's get at these supplies. I must be going."

As the two watched the canoe put out from the landing, the old Scot grumbled his disapproval as he combed at his red beard with his fingers.

"A rollin' stane he is that'll gather nae moss. When I was his age I'd be'n workin' near two year f'r the Company, an' in eight year I'll hae me my pension. An' what'll he hae when he's auld? He'll be lucky to live till he's auld, an' onlucky if he does, wi' naethin' to keep um. He's a ne'er-do-weel, an' a fair lesson to Kelly O'Neill f'r sparin' the rod!"

CHAPTER IV

SMOKE

BRIAN O'NEILL leisurely skirted the north shore of Lake Athabasca. Headwinds delayed him for two days, and he camped for three days with a small band of Wood Crees, set his nets, and smoked some fish. From the Indians he learned that there was a lake to the northward of Black Bay, but that no river connected it with Lake Athabasca. It was a large lake, the Indians said, and it lay a day's journey to the northward of Black Bay. There was no portage trail, but it was a good fishing lake. Sometimes a few Indians camped there to dry fish.

On Black Bay Brian cached his canoe and most of his outfit and struck northward on foot, skirting swamps and muskegs and following rock ridges stained red by the ocher of weathered pyrites. Time and again he paused to examine the rocks—gneiss, quartzite, and conglomerate. In the course of his wanderings he had crossed thousands of such ridges, but never before had he given them more than a passing thought. To him rocks had been simply rocks. But now as he scrutinized the tilted strata, the sharp cleavage

lines, the contrasting coloration and structural differentiation, he realized that here were things of which he knew absolutely nothing, things of profound importance to the North—his North. His thoughts leaped to the kindly eyed Seth Adams with his smile of quiet understanding. He remembered that the man had stooped now and again to pick up and examine the rock fragments at Fort Chipewyan. He recollected that the man was chief of the Geological Survey of Canada. To him these rocks meant something, their structure, the very tilt of their strata could unfold the story of the mighty convulsions and upheavals of a cooling world crust, of grinding ice glaciers, and of the worth of the North to man.

With tea a-boil over a tiny fire, he munched his smoked fish and bannocks and stared from his ridge across the level top of a black spruce swamp toward a hill that loomed red in the purple distance. Then it was that realization of his own incompetence forced itself upon him. He, Brian O'Neill, who had prided himself upon his knowledge of the North, who was known upon the rivers as a good man in the North, knew almost nothing about the North. The thought first angered, then appalled him.

For a long time he sat and sipped his tea. And when he at last arose and swung the pack to his shoulders he knew that never again would the old self-assurance be his. He knew so little—and there was so much to know. They were right—Old Kelly and the good Father Giroux—and he in the arrogance of his youth had been a fool. Well, there was time to learn. He would return to the river and hunt up Seth Adams. But first he would map the lake as he had promised. It was with new purpose, an almost fanatical eagerness, that he pushed northward.

Late in the afternoon he sighted the lake from the top of a high ridge. It was a large lake, its surface dotted with islands. For a half hour he studied its contours through his glass. At length he found what he sought, a thin spiral of smoke rising above the scrub on a long rocky point.

From the Indians he bought a canoe, and for ten days he paddled about the lake, exploring its shores and its islands. It was when he attempted to commit his findings to paper that his incompetence was again forced upon him. Try as he would, he realized that at best his rude sketches were woefully out of proportion, that his very location of the lake might well be many miles from its true position.

He knew that with instruments and certain observations of the sun or the stars men could determine their position to a nicety, and he realized with a curious blending of shame and anger that he did not even know the names of the instruments, much less anything of their use, or of the mathematical calculations required for the working out of the position. Well, he had done all that he could do. He had found the lake, and after a clumsy fashion, he had sketched it. Now he would hunt up Seth Adams. He hoped that Adams would not laugh at his effort, although instinctively he knew that he would not. No man with eyes like that would stoop to ridicule.

ASCENDING a high rock on the western shore, near the source of a river that formed the lake's only outlet, Brian seated himself with his glass for a final survey of the country. It was one of those rare days of absolute stillness. The island studded lake spread beneath him like a mirror of burnished sapphire, its unruffled surface depicting the image of each fleecy cloud with startling distinctness. Distorted by mirage, gulls alighting on the water a mile away looked like a fleet of huge white canoes. A pair of loons feeding nearby clove the surface in long rippling V's, disappearing now and then with an audible plop. At the shoreline inverted rocks and spruce trees reached downward into illimitable depths.

Brian surveyed the scene dreamily. A

frown creased his brow at the thought that tomorrow he would return to the rivers and hunt up Seth Adams. The wanderlust was strong upon him. His glance sought the point where the unknown river flowed smoothly into the northwest. Where did it empty? Was it a smooth, deep flowing stream? Or was its course broken by rapids and mighty falls? No river was shown on his map, not even a dotted one. Was it possible that he sat at the source of the vaguely indicated River Du Rocher that emptied into South Bay of Great Slave Lake, far to the northward? He knew that, more than anything in the world, he wanted to explore that river, and yet . . .

"Damn Seth Adams!" he exploded.

How was it that this quiet, kindly man, to whom he had spoken scarce a hundred words, had the power to change the whole tenor of his life? For he knew now that despite the urge within him, he would not, at least until he had learned many things, follow the course of that river from source to mouth. Scornful he had been of the arguments, the upraidings and the cursings of factors and rivermen. Contemptuous of the offers of Company men and oil men. Deaf to the veiled hints of Kelly O'Neill and to the more direct suggestions of Father Giroux. He was his own man—free as the air he breathed—his course unordered as the course of a leaf in the wind. And now, for the first time in his life, as he sat staring down upon the surface of the unmapped lake, he realized the futility of that course.

Always he had justified his wanderings in his own mind with the argument that he was learning the North. Rarely had he stooped to offer justification to others. Rather, he had flaunted in the face of disapproving factors his right to come and to go as he chose. With Kelly O'Neill and Father Giroux he had affected a tolerant scorn of book learning. Now into his life had stepped Seth Adams, who in a few short moments with words of approval rather than of censure, had unwittingly accomplished what all others had failed to accomplish, in convincing Brian O'Neill of the utter futility of his aimless wanderings.

In Seth Adams Brian had instinctively recognized a kindred spirit—one who loved to roam the wilderness, even as he loved to roam the wilderness—but with this difference: that to Adams the wilderness unfolded the secrets of her rocks, her lakes, her rivers and her forests; while to him it unfolded only the obvious and the superficial facts of terrain and of fauna, facts of little value to himself, and of no value to others, as his laborious and clumsy attempt at cartography had demonstrated.

When Adams had explored a wilderness he would know and posterity down through the ages would know the nature and the names of its trees and its soil and its rocks—their significance and their portent. Its lakes and its rivers, its forests, its muskegs, its hills and its barrens would be accurately recorded for the benefit of men to come. When he, Brian O'Neill, had explored a wilderness, he would know, so long as his memory served him, whether it was flat or hilly, barren or wooded, whether or not it contained game and fish, and little more. Rage, shame, humiliation, contempt surged up within him at the realization of his limitations.

"And I'm the one they say knows the North!" he cried bitterly. "The fools! The damned fools! I know nothing! *But I will know!* If I live I'll know the North as no one else ever knew it! He said there were things he could teach me. He'll have his chance—and when he's through, I'll learn more."

A low muttering rumble sounded on the still air and far to the eastward huge thunderheads showed above the distant horizon like the snow capped domes of rounded mountains. A loon laughed shrilly. The mirage effect intensified so that distant islands, their contours distorted, hung high and inverted above the blue mirror of the lake. Brian picked up his glass and, elbows on knees, subjected the scene to one last long scrutiny. He

turned the glass from the lake and endeavored to trace the course of the river.

Suddenly his glass came to focus upon a spot far inland where above the spruce-tops a thin haze of smoke blurred the vision. Smoke, in the Indian country, is no thing to marvel at, unless it be the high flung black banners of the fire fiend gone wild. To a man lost or starving, a thin ribbon of smoke may mean salvation. Was it imagination or a trick of the glass that showed this illusive column to be trifurcate in form? Or in reality were three smokes rising and merging into a haze that showed dimly gray against the purple distance? Methodically Brian wiped his lenses and again trained them upon the distant haze. Yes, there were three distinct columns, but so close together as to be scarcely distinguishable. The trouble signal, the S. O. S. of the Northland, the one call that can not be ignored.

Seth Adams was forgotten. Somewhere, doubtless upon the bank of the unmapped river, some one needed help. Probably an Indian—at any rate some one who was of the North, who knew the language of the wilderness. Thunder muttered, louder than before, and Brian produced his compass and took his course. Glancing hastily about him, his eye fell upon a single gnarled spruce firmly rooted in a crevice at the very apex of his high rock. With his belt ax he hastily trimmed its branches into a lob stick of unmistakable design, an unfailing back-sight from any ridge within range of his glass. Although reasonably certain that the smoke arose from some point on the bank of the river, he was taking no chances. Wind would precede the coming storm and whirl the smoke signal into invisibility at the treetops, but with his compass course and his lob stick he could go with unfailing accuracy to the point from which those three smokes were rising.

Ten minutes later his canoe slipped silently into the grip of the unknown river.

CHAPTER V

A WATERFALL—AND A GIRL

FOR THE first two miles of its course the river held to the eastward, flowing swiftly but smoothly, skirting a long rock ridge. Brian had estimated the signal smokes to be not more than five or six miles from his starting point, and he realized now that unless the river changed its course soon he must leave it and strike north on foot. Then the river bent sharply to the northward through a narrow cañon that clove the ridge at a right angle to its course. Although he had been expecting just such a bend, Brian came upon it so suddenly that it was only by exercising all his skill with the paddle that he succeeded in beaching the canoe on a narrow strip of gravel at the very mouth of the cañon.

Ascending the ridge by a portage trail so dim and little used as to be almost indiscernable, he noted that the smokes rose from a point not more than two or three miles downriver. With his glass he studied the water ahead. For a few hundred yards it flowed between the perpendicular rock walls of the cañon with incredible speed, but smoothly, like a river of oil.

Through the ridge it widened and rushed on into the distance in a foaming white-water rapid. Nearly a mile of white-water was visible, and Brian noted that the dim portage trail seemed to skirt the whole length of the rapid. He was in a quandary. Should he abandon his canoe and proceed on foot? Suppose the smoke rose from the opposite side of the river and he would find himself with no means of crossing . . . Should he run the rapid in his frail bark canoe with the chance of swift disaster on any one of a thousand jagged rocks? How much white-water lay beyond that distant bend? Suppose it ended in a fall . . .

A puff of cool wind fanned his face. Lightning flashed to the eastward, and its thunder re-echoed in a threatening roar. The distant smoke twisted and writhed and disappeared as the wind struck it.

The foot trail meant an hour, maybe two, of scrambling over rocks made slippery by the deluge that was about to come—the water trail a matter of minutes. Another flash of lightning and, before its thunder had ceased to reverberate, Brian had pushed his canoe clear of the gravel and in the grip of the current was slipping through the cañon at express train speed.

A moment later he was in the rapid, eyes staring straight ahead, hands gripping his trailing paddle as the frail craft plunged and bucked, shot ahead, swerved to miss jagged death by inches. Storm clouds obscured the sun, lightning flashed in forks, in blazing zigzags, in long blue spitting chains. The roar and roll of the thunder was continuous, and the rain, after a few big scattering drops, cut loose in blinding torrents. The view foreshortened to a few rods as Brian, tight lipped, every muscle alert, strove to pierce the curtain of blinding rain.

Another bend in the river and, as the canoe shot into another rock ribbed cañon, a sound was borne to Brian's ears, a steady incessant roar that sounded between the louder crashes of the thunder—the roar of a waterfall.

The roar of the fall and the crashing reverberation of thunder between the parallel walls of the narrow cañon united in a mighty symphony of sound that caused the heart of Brian O'Neill to leap within him. A man's way to die—fighting the North—accepting her challenge, fighting on her own terms, asking no odds. Fighting for the right to aid a human in distress. An Indian, no doubt, but what matter? Truly a man's death in a man's country! But he was not dead yet—he was still fighting.

The forefront of water dropped away. A line of white appeared, one dark spot where deeper water shot over the rim. A mighty twist of the paddle—sheer space beneath his keel—a strange sinking feeling, a terrible jarring crash—cold water—daylight again—the rain pounding his face . . . Then gravel beneath him, and two capable brown hands clutching one of his own, pulling, tugging, holding him against the grip of some monster that seemed to clutch the lower portion of his body in a grip of iron.

Half conscious, Brian raised his eyes and, for immeasurable moments, stared wide eyed into the face of a girl. In vain his brain groped for intelligence. Who was this being—this most beautiful woman he had ever seen? What gripped him and sought to drag him from her grasp into the seething maelstrom at the foot of the falls? Had he died? . . .

His brain cleared, and through the driving rain he could see that the lips of the girl were tight set as she strained every muscle in her body to maintain her grip on his wet hand, and that the heels of her moccasins had grooved the gravel until her feet were already in the water. Even as he looked, the water rose higher about her fawn skin leggings, while the thing that dragged at his hips seemed to redouble its effort. Rousing himself, he reached with his free hand and grasped the exposed root of a stunted bush that grew close to the water's edge. Throwing his whole strength into the pull, he felt the girl's grasp relax. The next instant she had leaped to her feet and stood over him while both hands gripped the collar of his heavy shirt. A few more heaves and he was clear of the water to his hips, while the thing that pulled at his legs seemed to have lost its power.

"Hold tight to the little tree and I will try to free you."

As the deep, rich voice sounded in Brian's ears, the girl released her hold and stepped to the water's edge. Craning his neck, Brian saw her stoop and seize hold of the bow of his shattered canoe which she succeeded in pulling partially clear of the water. The strain on his legs eased and Brian saw at a glance what had happened. Shooting over the twenty foot fall, the canoe must have struck the water on an even keel with the result that he had crashed through the bottom to the hips, and the canoe in the grip of the rapidly revolving eddy had held him as in a vise. With the canoe partially ashore the

danger from the river was past, and it was but the work of a few moments to disentangle himself from the wreckage.

THE RAIN had ceased as abruptly as it had started, and only the muttering of thunder to the westward marked the path of the passing storm. A single ray of sunlight, forcing its way through a rift in the windtorn clouds, struck aslant the waterfall and Brian felt his heart race wildly as he stared almost in awe at the beautiful girl who stood sharply outlined against the rainbow mist, her face still flushed from her exertions, her hair falling in a cascade of jet upon her shoulders.

"Who are you?" he asked, and his voice sounded harsh, almost brutal in its abruptness.

She turned toward him eagerly. Was it the rain, or were the hazel eyes brimming with tears?

"I am Annette Beauleau. But come—my father—see—he is over there!"

Brian's glance followed her pointing finger to a spot a few feet distant where a canoe lay overturned upon the gravel. A bit of blanket protruded from beneath the canoe.

"Is he hurt?" he asked as he followed the girl to the spot.

"Ah, yes, he is shot. And I am afraid he will die. It is very bad." There was no doubt of the tears, now, that coursed unchecked down the girl's cheeks. "I could not lift him into the canoe, and when the storm came I sheltered him as best I could."

Together they lifted the light craft and for a moment both gazed in silence into the upturned face of the unconscious man—a face so white that Brian feared for a moment that he was dead. Dropping to his knees he threw back the fold of blanket that covered the upper portion of the body and with his fingers ascertained a slight pulsation of the heart. Blood reddened bandages swathed his neck and shoulder, and Brian saw that blood still oozed from a wound beneath the armpit. Leaping to his feet, he dashed to his wrecked canoe, thanking his stars that he had not neglected to lash his pack to a thwart. From the sodden pack he procured a first aid kit and a bottle of whisky, and with his knife cut away the hastily placed, insufficient bandages. Three gaping wounds were exposed, their positions giving instant clue to the course of the bullet which had entered a couple of inches below the armpit, ranged upward, smashing the clavicle, torn out, and entered again low in the throat where it had evidently lodged. In some miraculous manner the bullet seemed to have missed the great arteries, but hemorrhage had occurred from the wound beneath the armpit and from the throat wound, although there seemed to have been no internal throat bleeding.

The girl watched breathlessly as Brian washed the wounds, plugged them, drenched them with iodine and applied neat workmanlike bandages.

"Oh, you have saved his life!" she cried, tears bathing her face. "He would have bled to death with my poor bandages."

Brian shook his head gravely.

"No, his life is not yet saved. Do not raise false hopes. The wound is very bad. He may not live. But, at least, we have done what we can—both of us. Without your bandages he would even now be dead."

"Oh, but you are a doctor. Surely you can save my father."

"I am no doctor. Merely a—a hobo of the outlands. All my life, since I have been old enough, I have drifted here and there as the spirit moved me. What little skill I may have in the dressing of wounds has been picked up. Where do you live? We must get him home."

The girl pointed downstream.

"It is only about half a mile. Our cabin is on the bank of the river. My father started for Fort Chipewyan for supplies. I was at the cabin and I heard a shot and, thinking that he had killed a caribou, I ran here as fast as I could so that I could cut out the meat and pack it back to the cabin where we have ice. For meat

spoils very quickly in the heat of summer —but the ice keeps it fresh until we can smoke it. When I got here my father was lying beside the canoe, and his shirt was soaked with blood. I do not know why he did it. He has never been so careless before. But, it was very plain—what had happened. He stepped out of the canoe and drew the gun toward him by the barrel. The muzzle must have been almost against his side when in some manner it went off, for his shirt had started to burn until his blood put it out. Many times he has told me never to take hold of a gun by the barrel."

Brian examined the piece, a cheap single shot trade rifle, carrying a soft lead bullet. He nodded corroboration of the girl's deduction.

"The hammer caught on a thwart or on the gunwale and was released before it came to full cock, but not until it had been drawn back far enough to fire the cartridge. We all make mistakes—and sometimes they are costly."

"Should we not give him a drink of the cognac?" asked the girl with a glance at the bottle that stood unopened upon the gravel.

Brian stooped and placed his fingers over the man's heart.

"That isn't cognac; it's whisky. And I don't like to give him any till we get him home and in bed, unless we have to. His heart seems a little stronger than it was, and the whisky might revive him—wake him up. No matter how careful we are, this moving him is going to be rough work, and if he stays unconscious he won't feel any pain."

"You know everything. You can do everything," said the girl simply. "I have not seen any man like you before. And I thank the good God that he sent you to me. You have saved my father's life."

BRIAN'S heart leaped at the words, and at the look of reverence, almost of adulation, with which the deep hazel eyes were regarding him. He groped for words, and when he spoke his voice sounded strangely gruff to his own ears.

"I know almost nothing. And there are few things I can do. It was you, yourself, called to me, with the smoke of your little fires." He pointed to the three piles of ashes and blackened, rain drenched sticks. "Only, next time, place your fires farther apart. It was only by chance, because the air was very still and because I have a very good glass, that I was able to read your signal. It looked like a single column of smoke, the smoke of an ordinary camp-fire. I saw it from a high rock on the shore of the lake."

"And you came as fast as you could! But did you not know of the rapids and the falls?"

"The rapids, yes. I stopped and looked them over from the high ridge at the first cañon. I could see about a mile of white-water. But I have run white-water before, and the foot trail looked long and rough. One does not delay in answering a call for help. A few minutes lost, and the help may come too late. Of the falls I knew nothing. This river is not on the maps."

The girl stepped directly before him and he saw that her cheeks were deeply flushed.

"When you say there are few things you can do, you do not speak the truth. No other man, seeing those rapids, would have dared to run them. Even if there had been no storm—and such a storm—as I lay there beside the canoe, I could scarcely see the falls so furiously was the rain coming down. And then, with a terrible flash of blue lightning behind you, and a crash of thunder that seemed to shake the earth, I saw you just beyond the rim of the falls. I saw your quick work with the paddle, and I saw the canoe swerve straight for the only spot in the whole river where it could have passed over without being torn to pieces—and then it shot straight out, clear of the falls and, without overturning, crashed to the surface of the pool. It was wonderful —terrible! In all my life I will never see a thing like it. No other could have done it—no other has ever done it. My father

and I, we have buried six over there—Indians who have been caught at times in the suck of the rapids. We have found their bodies floating round and round in the whirlpool, and sometimes they are battered until they do not look like men. All my life I have lived in canoes—and I know no other could do it."

"Even so," answered Brian gravely, "I owe my life to you. For, if it had not been for you, I too would have drowned in the whirlpool."

"I ran as fast as I could. Almost at the moment your canoe hit the water I was there, and it is that the good God gave me strength, for I reached your hand as the whirlpool carried you close to the bank. But we would have both been drowned if you had not come to and held to the tree root."

"You could have let go," suggested Brian, and on the instant was sorry he had spoken.

Quick anger flashed into the girl's eyes as she answered:

"One could not let go, while there was life. I knew that it was to help me you had come— But you have not told me your name."

"My name is Brian O'Neill."

CHAPTER VI

AT THE CABIN

JOVIN BEAULEAU was a large man, and the task of placing his unconscious form in the canoe without reopening his wounds was a difficult one. When this was accomplished, his head and shoulders braced and pillowed upon the two packs, the girl spoke:

"You run the canoe down and I will take the footpath. There is no bad water, and you will see our cabin on the left bank. I will be there almost as soon as you are."

Arriving at the landing, Brian beached the canoe and rigged up a litter out of two poles and a blanket and the old man was removed to the cabin, which stood in a grove of banksians on a bluff well above the river. When he had been placed in his bunk they fed him whisky diluted with hot water and, after some slight strangling, were rewarded by seeing the eyelids flutter and finally open, the keen, hawklike eyes shifting in bewilderment from the face of Brian to that of the girl.

As the old man's brain oriented itself, a touch of color tinged the white cheeks above the carefully cropped beard and he essayed speech, but the effort produced only inarticulate sounds, attended by such evident pain that Annette leaned over him.

"There, father, do not try to talk yet. You will be better soon—"

The gray head shook a feeble negative, and his fingers fumbled at his bandaged throat, as the keen old eyes fixed interrogatively upon the face of the young man who stood at the foot of the bunk.

"That is Brian O'Neill. Do you remember, father, you met with an accident? You shot yourself at the foot of the falls? And I found you and bound you up the best I could. But I could not move you alone. I did not know what to do, so I prayed to the good God, and built three fires, hoping that some Indian would see my smoke. Then the storm came, and the rain, and put out my fires, and I covered you with the canoe. Then he came, father! Out of the thunder and the lightning he came—down through the rapids, and *over the falls!*"

At the words the old man struggled feebly as though to raise his head for a better view of the man who had done this thing, and again the unintelligible sounds issued from his lips. Brian smiled.

"It was nothing. I saw the smoke from the lake and knew that some one needed help. Not knowing of the falls, I did not fear the rapids. Even so, if it had not been for Annette I would not be here now. When my canoe struck the water below the falls I crashed through its bottom and it gripped me by the thighs so that I could not swim, and Annette dragged me from the whirlpool, or I should have been pounded to pieces, or drowned."

Beckoning with fingers that trembled slightly, the old man freed his other hand

from beneath the blanket and, as Brian stepped to his side, he grasped his hand and the hand of the girl and pressed them with all the strength he could muster, while the bright old eyes expressed more eloquently than a torrent of words could have expressed, his appreciation of deeds well done.

The girl continued her interrupted tale:

"And he cut away my poor bandages, and washed your wounds, and put on medicine, and bound them up like any doctor would so that the bleeding stopped. And we moved you here."

The gray head nodded slightly, the bearded lips smiled, and the eyelids fluttered wearily and closed. The girl held a spoonful of whisky to his lips, but he turned his head away and, a few moments later, he was asleep, breathing regularly but feebly. Together the two tiptoed from the room.

On the river bank the girl helped Brian to spread his blankets and the contents of his pack to dry. When they had finished they seated themselves on a net box while Brian cleaned and oiled the two rifles.

Annette spoke, in evident embarrassment:

"We—I am afraid we have very little in the house to eat. My father generally goes for supplies soon after the ice goes out. And again with the dogs in the winter. But this year he kept putting it off. I think he is expecting a letter and wanted to be sure it would have reached Chipewyan. We have never got a letter, but last winter he wrote one, and I think he is expecting an answer. So the flour is almost gone, and the salt pork, and the tea, and the sugar. We have some smoked bear meat, and the nets will supply us with fish. But of the other things we have only a little."

"It isn't the grub that's worrying me," Brian answered. "We could live for a long time on the nets and the rifle, if we had to, but we don't. I have enough cached on Black Bay to last until—until your father gets well—" he was floundering miserably, and the girl came to his assistance.

"Or, until he dies?" The deep hazel eyes looked questioningly into the eyes of the man, and it was evident that she was steeling herself for his answer. "Tell me truly; do you think my father will die?"

Only for an instant did Brian hesitate.

"Listen, Annette. I am not a doctor. I wish I were. I know nothing of medicine, or of surgery. Some day I will know more. I can not say whether your father will live or die. What is to be done, we two must do. There is no doctor at Chipewyan — none nearer than Fort McMurray, and maybe none there. By the time we could get a doctor, the need for one would have passed. Your father would either have recovered from his wounds, or he would be dead. We will do the best we can. No one can do more. I am going to tell you truly, as you asked me to. I do not think your father can recover from his wounds. That bullet, misshapen from its contact with his collar bone, is lodged in his throat, and is probably pressing on some nerve or artery, or maybe both. It should be removed. I am not a surgeon. Your judgment is as good as mine. I suggest that we watch him closely for a day or two, and if it seems to us he is getting better we will leave things as they are until we can move him to a doctor. If he grows weaker, or fever sets in, he is doomed anyway. Then, if you say so, I will try to operate and remove the bullet. It is not a job to my liking. I would rather do anything else. But if we think it necessary, and you tell me to go ahead, I'll try it. It may kill him, but at least we will know that he would have died anyway. What do you think?"

"What can I think? I can but thank the good God that he sent me one who is both brave and wise."

BRIAN regarded her seriously.

"When you know me better you will come to realize how little I know. I only realized it myself within the last few days. And, now each day, the realization is strength-

ening. My father, Kelly O'Neill, and Father Giroux have tried, each in his own way, to impress me with the value of an education. They both failed. I thought I knew it all. And then, by accident, I met a man who made me suddenly realize how little I do know. But, some day, I will know!"

"I should not like that man!" cried the girl. "He is a horrible man. Any man is horrible who tries to make out that he knows more than others. And, especially, to try to make out that he knows more than you. You should have given no heed to his words. You should have struck him in the face."

Brian laughed.

"No, Annette. He is not that kind of man at all. When you know him you will like him."

"I will never like him. Could he have run the rapids and come over the falls?"

"I don't know," admitted Brian, amused at the girl's vehemence. "Going over the falls was more or less a matter of luck; the rapids too, I suppose. But, leaving the luck out of it, there is much more to be known than the running of rapids."

"It was not luck! All the luck in the world would not take a man safely through two miles of such rapids as those. And it was not luck that carried you safely over the falls. I was watching, and I saw you swerve the canoe at just the right moment to carry you over in safety. And, if that man could not have come through as you did, anything else he might know would not matter—for he would be dead."

Brian was enjoying himself hugely.

"Maybe, then, being wiser than I, he would have passed the rapids up, and come down by the portage trail—"

"Then he would have been a coward, which is the worst of all. If you had come down on foot my father would have died of the bleeding. No, I do not like that man, and always I shall hate him!"

Brian's smile broadened as certain words of old Kelly O'Neill's flashed into his brain. "Arguin' wid a woman, son, is amusin', but unprofitable, and the more ye argue the longer it'll take ye to get back jist where ye started."

"What are you laughing at?" asked the girl, a trace of irritation in her tone.

"I was thinking of my father—that maybe he is a wiser man even than I realized."

Annette nodded seriously.

"I can well believe that he is very wise. My father, too, is very wise—and very good." Hot tears welled into the hazel eyes, and the rich voice faltered. "So good, and so patient, and so kind always to me and to my mother."

"Your mother?"

For answer the girl pointed to a sodded mound at the edge of the bluff near the cabin.

"She lies there. Three years ago in the winter she died, and in the spring when the ground thawed we buried her there overlooking the river where she used to love to sit and sew while my father would read to her from books. It was there, too, that she taught me my lessons. And it is there that my father and I often sit and talk. We like to think that she is listening. Of course, it is all make-believe, but it—somehow—it makes her seem nearer."

"I think I understand," said Brian gravely. "And maybe it is not all make-believe, after all. If I believed that our spirit or soul, or whatever it is, goes on living after death, I would much rather believe that it stayed near to those it loved most on earth, than to believe that it stayed way off in some place they call heaven or hell."

The girl regarded him quizzically.

"Do you not believe that we go on living after death? Surely you do not believe that the grave is the end of all. Why, it would make our lives so—so futile, so like the lives of the beasts."

"I do not know what I believe. I have never given the matter much thought. Nor do I think that it makes any difference what I believe. My believing, or not believing, would not change the es-

tablished order. I do believe that if we live decently, play the game, as they say, do the best we know how, help those in need of help, and do not injure others, that we will be amply rewarded in this world. If there is another state of existence beyond, we will lose nothing by having played the game square."

"Do all wise men believe the same, I wonder? You talk much as my father talks. Only since my mother died he has joined me in my make-believe. But I think it is more out of respect for her belief than any belief of his own. My mother was a good Catholic and she instructed me in the belief of the church. And now that she is gone, I think my father feels that it would be unfair to interfere with her teachings. He believes that, with an open mind, I can best judge for myself. He is like that—my father. Even though he is not a believer himself, he respects the belief of others, and for all religion he has a wide tolerance."

"And when you have said that about any man," said Brian, "you have paid him the highest compliment you could have paid."

"You will love my father—when you know him."

"I know him already, Annette. One could not help loving such a man."

"Ah, but you do not know the half—not the tenth, about my father. His has been a life of sadness, of bitter toil, and of disappointments. And all for the love of my mother—and me. And never once has he faltered in that love—never once expressed regret for—what might have been." The girl ceased abruptly and leaped to her feet. "But here, I am talking on and on, forgetting that you are hungry! You must forgive me! You are the first man except my father to whom I have ever talked—I mean, to whom I have really said the things that are in my heart to say. You are the first who would have understood. To the others one may talk of fish, and of dogs, and the making of snowshoes. I will build the fire, now, and cook supper, for see, the shadows already grow long."

AS SHE passed him to ascend the bank, Brian laid a restraining hand on her arm, and the blood quickened in his veins.

"You are different from other women. In my life I have not known many women— Do not go to the cabin. He is sleeping—and it is best that he be not disturbed. I have bannocks. They did not get wet in the waterproof bundle. I have smoked fish, and my tea is watertight. We will build our fire here and when we have eaten I will start back."

"Start back. What do you mean?" The genuine concern in the eyes of the girl brought a smile to Brian's lips.

"Back to the lake. There is a band of Indians camped on a point drying fish. It was from them I bought my canoe. I will get them to go to Black Bay and pack the stuff from my cache. I will have them pack it over the portage trail to the foot of the falls and we can meet them there. It is best that I should go now while your father is resting easy. I can reach their camp by midnight if I can make the portage trail before dark. That will be the only hard job, packing the canoe over the portage—you say it is two miles?"

"Yes, two miles, but you do not pack the canoe. We keep another canoe cached at the head of the trail. It is under a bark shelter, behind a large rock, about as far as from here to the cabin east of the small strip of gravel."

"That makes it easy. It can't be more than two miles from the head of the portage to the lake, and not more than ten or twelve from there to the camp of the Indians. I can make the camp in six or seven hours, and be back here an hour after daylight in the morning."

"But when will you sleep?"

Brian smiled at the evident anxiety in the girl's tone.

"I am not tired, and I will have plenty of time to sleep when I return."

Impulsively the girl laid her two hands on Brian's shoulders.

"I think you are wonderful!" she cried.

"When I was so helpless I prayed to the good God. But the best I hoped for was that an Indian would help me take my father home. And then the storm put out my fires and hope died within me. It was the end! And then out of the storm you came. It was an answer to prayer and a proof of the faith of my mother."

"You forget," said Brian, cynically, "that it was the smoke, not the prayer, that I saw. But we will argue that later. Let us eat, so that I may make the lake before dark."

CHAPTER VII

A MAN'S JOB

BECAUSE the June twilight is long in the Northland, darkness had not yet fallen when Brian reached the point where the Indians had been camped. Rock rings, fish racks, a rotten fish net, torn beyond possibility of redemption, marked the deserted camp site. Seating himself upon a rock, he produced his glass and with infinite care swept the visible shoreline. No flicker of fire rewarded his scrutiny, and he returned the glass to its case.

The Indians had gone. So be it. Then he himself must pack the supplies from Black Bay. He had once covered the ground which the Indians of Lake Athabasca had told him was a day's journey, in less than a day. He could do it again. He had told Annette he would be back in the morning an hour after daylight. What would she think—that he had failed her? A frown, half perplexity, half anger, clouded his brow. Here was he, Brian O'Neill with a thing to do, plain and unmistakable, and he was hesitating to do it because of what a girl might think. He, who with splendid disregard had flaunted his comings and his goings in the face of the whole North, was hesitating to do the obvious thing to do because of his promise to a girl he had known but a dozen hours.

He shook himself as if to rid his shoulders of a burden. Jovin Beauleau was to be considered—not the girl. Let her think what she would. She would know in the end that he had acted for the best. If he started at once, he could still travel for an hour, and even with a heavy pack could be back at the cabin by dark tomorrow. Jovin Beauleau might die in the meantime, but, if he should die, he would have died anyway. There was nothing to lose, and in case of a long recovery, it was necessary that the three should eat.

Stepping to the canoe, Brian pulled it clear of the water and shouldered his pack sack, which contained one damp blanket. When it became too dark to travel he camped on the summit of a rock ridge, and at daylight he again pushed southward, refreshed by three hours of sleep.

From his cache he took flour, salt pork and sugar, made up an eighty pound pack and struck out on the back trail. The day was oppressively hot. Black flies and mosquitoes assailed him in torturing swarms. The heavy pack galled and chafed his shoulders beneath his sweat drenched shirt. The absence of any trail necessitated his picking his way along rough ridges whose surfaces were littered with jagged rock fragments and overgrown vines and bushes; crawling, climbing, smashing among the prostrate trunks of an old brule, and wallowing knee deep in the muck of swamps.

At noon he rested for an hour, devoured smoked fish and guzzled strong black tea. His muscles ached. And his galled shoulders smarted like fresh scalds. Twenty-four hours ago, he reflected, he had lolled comfortably on the big rock and watched the approaching storm and laid his plans for the future. Much had happened since his glass had picked up that smoke signal. He had missed death by a hair. He had made it possible for old Jovin Beauleau to recover; or to die comfortably in his bed, instead of miserably on the gravel at the foot of the falls. And he had met Annette. The thought of the girl—the wild, dark beauty of her—

stirred depths within him that had remained unsuspected and unplumbed.

Questions crowded his brain. Why had his heart leaped at the touch of her hand? Why did he want more than anything in the world to be back with her now? Was this the thing that men called love? He knew nothing of love . . . He knew a few women—the wives and the daughters of factors and rivermen—but to these he had never given a passing thought. He had not avoided them; neither had he sought their company. They were women; and he was a man, and therefore his interests differed from theirs.

He knew that it was a common thing for a man and a woman to marry and live together and have children. That was all well enough for factors, and for men who were content to live their lives in one place. The women cooked and washed the clothes and looked after the children, and many of them kept the houses clean. They worked hard—harder even than the men. But they hampered a man, tied him down. He had often promised himself that he would never marry. Women and children were immobile, and he must be free to come and to go as he pleased.

But, Annette, now—she was different. Just to be near her, to know that she was near him was a pleasure in itself. She had told him she had spent her life in canoes. She would not hamper his movements. In fact, two could travel the wilderness more easily and more comfortably than one. And at meals and in the evening when the work of the trail was done they could talk. That was much better than sitting and thinking, or talking to one's self.

He found himself wondering what would become of Annette in the event of Jovin's death. Who was Jovin Beauleau anyway? Why was he living far in the outland upon an unmapped river that flowed out of an unmapped lake into God knows where? How did he live? He did not look like a trapper, and certainly there was no fur in the light pack he was taking to Chipewyan. Surely there must be relatives—some one, maybe in some city or town of the provinces, to whom she could go if her father died.

He felt strangely alone. The thought angered him. He, Brian O'Neill, was lonely in the heart of his wilderness—And all because a girl he had known less than twenty-four hours was going out of that wilderness. She should not go out. And yet, there was Seth Adams, and the education he had determined to get. Brian frowned deeply as he snugged his pack. Instead of a roving, carefree existence, life had suddenly become a complex thing, a thing of weighty decisions, and of problems to be worked to solution.

HE EXTINGUISHED his fire and shouldered his pack. At least, one need not cross a bridge till one got to it. His job was to pack in the supplies. Time to think of the future when Jovin Beauleau got well, or died. He found himself hoping that the wound would be slow to kill, or that the old man's recovery would be prolonged.

Despite the heat and his galling pack, Brian forced the trail. He must reach the cabin by dark, or Annette would worry. The thought thrilled him strangely—that Annette should worry for his safety.

"Annette Beauleau." He repeated the name aloud, rolling it upon his tongue—a beautiful name, a French name . . . strange that he had never cared for the French.

On and on he toiled over rocks and across muskeg. The shadows were long as he staggered out on to the shore of the lake at the point where he had cached his canoe. With muscles trembling from strain, he slipped from under the pack that for miles and miles had seemed to press him to the ground so that he could scarcely place one foot before the other. Times innumerable he had fallen, only to struggle to his feet and stumble on.

And now the grueling grind was over—a man's job—nearly fifty miles, the half of them under an eighty pound pack, and

no trail! For long minutes he lay on the gravel in a half stupor of exhaustion. Then, summoning his strength, he stripped off his clothing and plunged into the lake. The cold water instantly revived him, giving life to jaded muscles and soothing tortured skin. A stiff breeze from the south had arisen and Brian smiled as he dressed himself. Cutting three light poles, he rigged his blanket as a sail, stowed the pack to brace his mast and pushed out into the lake, heading for the mouth of the river, directly downwind.

The two miles of the portage trail were as nothing, when in the gathering darkness he hurried along with scarce a thought for the heavy pack. Starlit dark found him once more upon the river, and as he rounded the bend to the cabin a bright little fire welcomed him from the bank. As the canoe beached the girl stepped from the shadows.

"Did you think I had deserted you?" smiled Brian.

"Oh, no, I knew that you would come. Three times, today, while my father slept, I walked up to the falls. Then, when it began to grow dark I built the little fire so that you would know that I was watching for you, that I would not sleep while you worked. And now our supper is ready. We can eat it here so we will not disturb my father. He is sleeping again. See, here is the tea and some bread I made today and the smoked bear meat."

"Haven't you had your supper?"

"No, I waited for you."

Once again the strange new thrill welled up within him, and it was with an effort that Brian refrained from reaching out and drawing the girl close against his pounding heart.

"How is he?" he asked, with a jerk of the thumb toward the cabin.

"He slept well during the night, but today he seems to be growing more restless. He sleeps a short time and then he wakes up and makes sounds. But he can not speak words. I have fed him only a very little of the broth I made. It seems to strangle him. I am afraid he has a fever, for he feels hot, and his eyes are very bright, and at times a strange look comes into them, as though he is seeing things that are not there. He has been trying to tell me something, I think, but when I gave him a pencil and paper he could not write—only make scratches and marks that do not mean anything. At last he gave it up. After we have eaten I wish you would look at him."

"Sure, I will, Annette. And, maybe we had better sit up with him by turns."

"I will sit beside him," cried the girl. "You must be very tired. Is it that you had trouble in finding the Indians?"

"I couldn't find them. I think they have left the lake. I went for the grub myself."

Annette rose without a word and, walking to the canoe, lifted the heavy pack. It took all her strength, and she set it heavily upon the gravel. Then she turned and stared incredulously into his face.

"You have been to Black Bay, to the big lake, and back since you left here—and carried that!" she cried.

"Yes. We needed the grub—and there was no other way to get it."

"I could believe it of no other man," she said simply, "for no other man could have done it. No other man would have done it if he could. And now you talk of sitting up half the night with my father! I have thanked the good God and I have prayed to Him for your safety. Tonight I shall thank Him again for sending the best man in the world to help me in the time of my trouble."

"No, Annette! There are plenty of men who could have done it, and who would have been glad to do it. And I am not tired now. I got a good rest crossing the lake. The wind was right, and I sailed."

THE GIRL filled the plates from a pot placed close beside the fire. She poured the tea, and threw on some wood, and as Brian turned to draw the empty net box into the light for a table, she gave a

low cry and dropped to her knees by his side.

"You are hurt! Your shirt is all bloody!"

"No, it is nothing. I did not figure on doing any packing, so I wore but a single cotton shirt. The pack straps galled me a little, that's all."

Before he realized she was gone, the girl was halfway up the bank. She returned in a few moments with a bottle.

"Take off your shirt," she said, "and I will rub this pain killer on your hurts."

"Sit down and eat your supper," answered Brian, his mouth full of bear meat. "Don't mind—"

"Take off that shirt this minute!" she cried, stamping her foot. "Sometimes you make me very angry. You are good to every one but yourself. It is a wonder one so foolish could live. Take off your shirt, or I will tear it off with my hands!"

Brian stared open mouthed at the girl as she delivered her tirade. Half bewildered at the vehemence of her attack, he found himself obeying as a matter of course.

As the garment slipped from his shoulders she uttered a gasp, and he saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Oh, it is terrible!" she cried. "It is as though you had been skinned with a knife! Turn your back to the light so that I can see. This will hurt you—but it will make you well. Oh, why did you not tell me?"

Very gently she was applying the liniment, and Brian grinned as it bit into the raw flesh. When she had finished she tossed the empty bottle aside, and as Brian reached for his shirt she jerked it from his hand.

"You can not put that shirt on. It is stiff with blood and sweat. I will bring you a clean one, and tomorrow I will wash that. When your things got dry I carried them into the house, and I sewed some things that were torn, and sewed on some buttons."

Once more she sped up the bank and returned with a clean shirt which she eased on to his smarting shoulders, but Brian gave no thought to the pain. He was conscious only of a strange feeling of well being—of comfort. Annette—the most beautiful girl in all the world—had cared for his things, and tomorrow she would wash his shirt!

The meal was concluded in silence, but more than once Brian's fingers traced the course of a neat seam on his sleeve, where he remembered a ragged tear had been,

CHAPTER VIII

BRIAN TURNS SURGEON

IN THE cabin, by the light of a single candle, the two leaned over the bunk upon which Jovin Beauleau tossed restlessly and mouthed sounds that were not words. The eyes, fever bright, that stared up at them from the pillow showed no glint of recognition, but seemed to stare past them at the grotesque shadows that played upon the log walls as the candle flame wavered and flared in the light breeze in the room. Brian laid his palm upon the brow and found it hot and dry to the touch. He held a spoonful of whisky and water to the parched and drawn lips. The liquid was sucked greedily from the spoon, but its swallowing was accompanied by such spasms of strangling that Brian laid the spoon aside and motioned to the girl who followed him through the doorway.

She blew out the candle, and as they stood there in the night with the pungent odor of the mosquito smudge in their nostrils, Brian saw by the light of the glittering stars that her face was very white, and that the dark eyes that looked into his own were brimming with tears. He hesitated, his brain groping for words, when the girl forestalled him.

"He is worse," she said with forced calm.

"Yes, he is worse. He has a fever, and I am afraid he can not swallow enough to keep life in his body. He might die of starvation if the fever does not take him first, unless—" He paused, and Annette

stepped closer and laid her hand on his arm.

"Unless the bullet is removed from his throat?"

Brian nodded.

"It is a chance in a thousand—maybe a chance in a million—and maybe no chance at all. I do not know. But I can't stand by and see a good man die without doing all I can to save him."

The capable brown fingers trembled upon his arm, and Brian felt their grip tighten as she steeled herself for the decision.

"Then, Brian, you will try to take out the bullet?"

It was the first time her lips had framed his name, and the sound thrilled him. And in that moment he knew that for this woman he would attempt anything in the world.

"Yes, Annette," he answered, "I will try. We can do nothing tonight. We have not light enough. Tomorrow we will do our best. But you must understand that I know nothing whatever of surgery. The operation may kill him. I may cut into an artery that will cause him to bleed to death, or he may die from the shock. We have no anesthetic. It is a terrible decision that we are making, but he is growing worse so rapidly that he can only live a few days—maybe only a few hours. You are certain you understand?"

"Yes, I understand. I know it is a terrible thing I am asking you to do. But believing as we both do that there is the barest chance to save his life, we must take that chance. Even if he should die under the knife, it would be better than to linger on for days and suffer as he is suffering, burning with fever, tortured with thirst that can not be satisfied, fighting a hopeless fight."

Brian took the brown hand in his own.

"You are a brave girl, Annette. The most wonderful woman I have known." She stood close at his side, her eyes raised to his, her red lips parted slightly, and it seemed to Brian that at his words a slight flush tinged the pallor of her face. He knew that his own hand was trembling and it seemed that the girl must hear the mighty pounding of his heart. He turned abruptly away, and his voice sounded unnatural:

"Come, you must get some sleep. Tomorrow will be a hard day, Annette—the hardest day you have ever lived."

She followed him into the house and, lighting the candle, set it upon the table. Jovin lay quiet upon his bunk, and Annette stepped close and whispered into Brian's ear.

"The bed is there," she said, pointing to a bunk built along the opposite end of the cabin. "You go to bed, and I will sit by the side of my father. It is past midnight, and you need sleep."

Brian's protest got no further than its opening sentence. He noted the squaring of the shoulders, and in the hazel eyes the glint of swift anger that had preceded her command to take off his shirt.

"Go to bed," she cried. "Do not stand there talking. We have work to do tomorrow, and you need the rest! Go now —or I shall be very angry. I will call you at daylight."

SHE TURNED her back upon him with an air of finality and blowing out the candle, seated herself in the chair beside the injured man. Brian threw himself down upon the other bunk, and in a few moments his heavy regular breathing told the girl he was sleeping the sleep of utter body weariness.

The two men slept and the cheap little clock ticked monotonously upon its shelf, as Annette sat staring into the dark trying to envision what the coming day would bring forth, wondering vaguely of the future, conning the past. Now and again her head would drop forward and she would waken with a start, tense, listening; but there were no sounds save the regular breathing from her own bed, the shorter, panting breaths from the bunk beside her, and the illusive little night sounds that drifted in through the door.

Once her father stirred restlessly and uttered his unintelligible sounds, and she lighted the candle and fed him a spoonful of whisky and water. Fearing that his choking effort to swallow had awakened Brian, she crossed the room and, in the yellow candlelight, she stood looking down upon the slumbering form.

"He looks just like a little boy," she breathed softly to herself. "And yet he is so much a man! He said I was the most wonderful woman he had known and in his eyes I could see it—that he—he loves me. In his eyes I could see his love—and I would have loved him forever if he had told me what was in his heart!"

Swiftly, impulsively, she stooped and her red lips lightly brushed the bronzed cheek. The form stirred slightly and in a panic of confusion she blew out the candle and fled to her chair, her stockinged feet making no sound upon the floor. For minutes she sat in tense silence as her heart beats kept time with the swiftly ticking clock. But the regular breathing continued, and once more she drowsed in her chair and dreamed of a huge bird that came flying to her over the falls. Out of the storm the bird came and caught her up, and the woods and the river grew smaller and farther away, and then she saw that it was no bird at all, but Brian O'Neill, and there was no storm any more, and no world—nothing—just the two together, drifting on, and on, and on . . .

She was awakened by a hand on her shoulder and the voice of Brian O'Neill in her ears. Daylight flooded the room, and she stared up, bewildered, into the eyes that smiled down into her own.

"Better turn in now and get a little real rest," he was saying.

"Oh," she cried, with a glance of apprehension toward her father. "I must have fallen asleep!"

Brian nodded.

"No harm done. He seems to be resting easy. And you were not really asleep, just dozing. Any one would have done the same. You were dead tired. What you need is three or four hours of real sleep."

"I am all right now. I am wide awake."

There was no smile in the steel blue eyes now, nor any glint of anger such as flashed into her own eyes when he had balked at her orders—only a slight narrowing of the lids, and a calm, level gaze that seemed, somehow, more terrible than the flash of anger. And the words that fell from his lips were uttered in a level, almost soft tone, but behind their velvet softness the girl sensed the inexorable hardness of chilled steel.

"Go to bed," he said. "I will call you when I need you." And very meekly, and without a word of protest, Annette walked to her bunk as Brian stepped out through the doorway.

A plunge in the cold waters of the river and a vigorous swinging of the arms did much to rid Brian's shoulders of their stiffness and ache, and aside from an uncomfortable smarting of the chafed skin, he felt fit and fine as he drew on his clothing and seated himself upon the overturned net box to think.

At the end of a half hour he arose and ascended the bank, more than ever chagrined at his own incompetence. Peering in through the doorway, he saw that the old man still slept, his breath coming regularly but in short rapid gasps. A curtain of printed calico drawn across the room on a wire screened Annette's bed. As Brian studied the details of the cabin he frowned at the dimness of the interior, lighted by its single little window and the open door.

"Got to get him outside," he muttered and turned away to explore a small pole outbuilding for tools.

Selecting an ax, hammer and nails, he walked to the banksian grove where he soon completed a creditable operating table out of poles. He padded its top with spruce boughs and over all threw one of his own blankets. Seating himself, he carefully honed and stropped his two razors which he laid aside and again explored the tool house, this time emerging with a half dozen new files, and a pair of rusty pliers. For two hours he filed at the pliers, narrowing and thinning their jaws.

"That ought to grip the bullet if I can locate it," he muttered, examining his handiwork. "Now a piece of wire for a probe, and I'm ready. Not much of an outfit, but it will have to do."

He glanced toward the cabin and saw that smoke was rising from the stovepipe. Picking up his razors and pliers, he stepped to the door to see Annette busy in the preparation of breakfast. He laid the instruments upon the table.

"We will boil these," he said, and turned toward the curtained partition that had been drawn back against the wall. "And I've got to use a piece of your wire. There is no more about the place."

The girl nodded without speaking, her eyes fixed in fascination upon the razors and the newly filed pliers. Brian filed off a length of the wire, doubled it back on itself, twisted it into a blunt stiff probe and fitted the cut ends into a wooden handle. As he laid it on the table he noted that the girl's face was bloodless, her lips tight pressed, and that once more her gaze was fixed upon the little array of instruments. Gathering them up, he walked to the stove and dropped them into the pan in which the water was already coming to a boil. Then he stepped to the girl's side.

"Buck up, Annette," he said gently. "We are up against a thing we have got to see through. We must save your father's life if it is possible to save it. We mustn't lose our nerve."

"You will not lose your nerve," she said in a tone of quiet conviction.

"I hope not. But it is just as important that you do not, either. I will need help."

ANNETTE set the food on the table and breakfast was eaten in silence. With a cup of tea before him, Brian sat balancing a fork on his finger. It was a three tined steel fork and he stared at it idly. Annette, watching in tight lipped silence, noticed that the balanced fork did not tremble. Suddenly she saw his eyes take on a gleam of interest. He stared fixedly at the fork for a moment, then crossed the room and came back with the file. It was the work of a few moments to file off the two outer tines. Retrieving the pliers from the boiling water, Brian opened the stove and held the single tined fork in the fire till it reddened. Then with the pliers he bent it at a right angle near the point of the tine and tempered it in warm water. "May need just such a hook to lift the bullet so we can get hold of it with the pliers," he explained, and returned both instruments to the pan.

"Where did you get the pliers?" asked the girl, "Do you carry them with you?"

"No, I found them in the shed—"

"But ours are not like that. They are old and rusty and much larger."

"Yes, they were too clumsy so I cut them down. Wore out three files doing it. I think they'll work now." Brian drained his cup and passed it to be refilled.

"Better drink some more tea, Annette —maybe a little of that whisky in it would help."

"Do you want whisky in yours?"

"No, I don't use it much—once in a while when I'm chilled, or very tired."

"I think I will not take any, either. I am not tired, nor chilled."

For a long time they sat in silence. Then their eyes met and, catching the unspoken question in the girl's glance, Brian said slowly:

"Yes, Annette, we will do what we have to do." He thought the girl's face, if possible, went a shade paler and, rising abruptly, he began to give orders. "Get me that little bag that has the bandages and iodine in it. We'll need some cloths besides—clean dish towels will do if you scald them. Scald out the dishpan, and fill it with warm water. And thread a strong needle and throw it in with the instruments."

As the girl hastened to obey, she glanced toward her father's bunk.

"There is not much room, nor much light," she said.

"No, we will carry him outside. I built a table under the trees. Plenty of room and plenty of light."

"You never forget anything. You are wonderful," she exclaimed, and Brian noticed that there was a catch in her voice.

"I never knew enough to forget much," he answered lightly. "While you get those things together I'll rig a blanket on to the poles so we can carry him. He has been pretty quiet this morning. I believe he is unconscious, and I hope he stays that way. The job ought not to take long once we get started."

Jovin Beauleau lay as one dead. Even the ordeal of lifting him from his bunk to the litter laid alongside on the floor failed to rouse him. The two carried him to the grove and laid him upon the improvised operating table where Brian held legs, arms and body immovable with many turns of babiche line. His chin was thrust sidewise and upward to expose the throat, and his head secured by means of heavy bands of cloth.

While Brian scrubbed his hands thoroughly with soap and water, Annette carried the pan of improvised instruments, the warm water, cloths, bandages and iodine and arranged them upon the net box that Brian had brought up from the river and placed beside the operating table.

When all was in readiness Brian spoke to the girl.

"Scrub your hands and then stand by to help," he said, and proceeded immediately to cut away the bandage from the old man's throat.

It stuck at the wound and he freed it with a jerk. Blood oozed out and trickled on the blanket. Failing to locate the bullet by feeling with his fingertips, he picked up the probe and, inserting it in the mouth of the wound, pushed it gently inward and upward, following the supposed course of the bullet.

It seemed a long time as he slowly moved the probe about before its end came into contact with something hard. Very carefully he withdrew the probe, noting the angle and the depth of penetration.

"Must lie an inch and a half deep," he muttered, "and about the same distance above where it went in."

He turned to see Annette standing, white faced, behind him. "The razor," he said crisply.

When she handed it to him he turned from her and, stretching the skin between thumb and forefinger, made a swift, shallow incision from a point some two inches above the wound to the mouth of the wound itself. Fresh blood flowed, and the trussed body shuddered slightly and again became still. Although knowing little of anatomy, Brian reasoned that the larger veins and arteries of the throat and neck should run vertically so that there was slight danger of severing them.

"Wring out a cloth and keep this slit mopped as clean as you can. I can't see through this blood," he called over his shoulder, and the next instant the girl was at his side, blotting the blood from the incision.

In the absence of lock forceps, the wound refilled rapidly, so that it required constant mopping. Working swiftly with the razor, Brian cut a little deeper each time, pausing to scrutinize the wound for the appearance of anything that looked like the walls of a vein or an artery, or of the larger tubes of the throat.

Finally the point of the razor blade struck a hard object and, cutting a bit deeper above and below it, Brian waited for the girl to drain the incision. In the instant's inspection he got before blood again obscured his view he saw that his razor had missed the wall of a large tube-like artery by scarce the thickness of a sheet of paper. Unshaken, he called to Annette:

"The pliers and the hook. And keep the blood out as clean as you can."

When she had blotted the incision, he inserted the pliers closed, turned them at a right angle to the incision and opened them, thus spreading the incision at the bottom, and pushing the large artery aside. Then with the hook he reached beneath the bullet and, working this way and that, finally succeeded in unseating it from its position.

Blood flowed more freely as the bullet moved, and Brian was forced to wait till the girl had mopped it up before he could manipulate the hook and draw the bullet nearer to the surface. A moment more, and inserting his thumb and forefinger, he withdrew it, washed it in the pan and examined it carefully to see that it had not been split into pieces.

Finding it intact, but misshapen from contact with the collar bone, he tossed it aside. Flushing the incision with a mixture of iodine and water, he closed it with three stitches, painted it and the wound liberally with iodine, and rebandaged the throat.

"Bring the whisky and water and a spoon," he ordered, and as Annette flew to the cabin, he worked swiftly in removing the babiche line and the bands of cloth that had held the injured man immovable.

WHEN the girl returned Brian slipped his arm beneath the old man's head while she held a spoonful of the liquid to his lips. As it trickled into his throat a shudder shook the man's frame, the muscles of his throat worked, and he swallowed convulsively. Again and again the girl refilled the spoon, and each time the liquid was swallowed. A slight flush pinked the pallid cheek, the eyelids fluttered, and the keen old eyes glanced sanely from one face to the other. The lips moved and as they framed her name Annette burst into a torrent of weeping, and throwing her arms about Brian's neck, she buried her face in his shoulder and sobbed:

"Oh, you have saved his life! He no longer strangles. And he can talk."

In his confusion Brian could only pat her arm with his free hand while he endeavored to hold the old man's head upon his other arm.

"There, there, Annette—listen—he is trying to tell you something."

The sobbing stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and the girl inclined her head to catch the words:

"Annette, little daughter, the gold—you must record it. A pencil—I grow weaker . . ."

"A pencil and paper quick!" cried Brian.

As Annette sped toward the cabin, he held a spoonful of whisky and water to the lips. Jovin Beauleau smiled into the eyes of the younger man.

"You got—the bullet."

"Good God!" cried Brian, "You were—conscious?"

"The pain—was great. My little girl—look after . . ."

Annette arrived, breathless, and at sight of her, before Brian could prevent, Beauleau made a mighty effort to rise as he reached for the pencil and paper. The outstretched arm dropped to the blanket, the shoulder bandage suddenly crimsoned, and red blood gushed from its edges. Brian lowered the head and with his hands tore at the bandage, and as it came away, blood spurted from the shattered shoulder. Plugging the wound with one hand, he sought for the artery with the fingers of the other, while Annette bent to catch the words that came feebly from the dying lips:

"A good man . . . daughter . . . the gold. You two—I—go—to—your—mother . . ."

"A bandage—quick, Annette!" cried Brian, whose fingers had clamped upon the artery so that the flow of blood was almost checked.

And when no bandage appeared, he turned his head to see the girl, lying an inert heap upon the ground.

For minutes that seemed hours Brian stood pinching the artery, while with his other hand he tried in vain to detect a flutter of the heart. Realizing at length that Jovin Beauleau was dead, he released his hold and, picking up the razor, enlarged the wound to determine the cause of the rupture. It was but the work of a moment to find it. The old man's effort to rise had displaced a short, sharp sliver from the shattered clavicle which had pierced the great subclavian artery at a point where the bullet had bruised and weakened the wall.

For a long time Brian stood gazing from the body of the old man, to the still form of the girl on the ground. Hot tears filled his eyes and trickled down his cheeks as he realized how keen was his disappointment; for he too had believed that Jovin Beauleau would live after the successful removal of the bullet.

Washing the blood from his hands, he picked up the girl, carried her to the cabin and laid her gently upon her bed, where he sponged her face with cold water and fed her whisky from a spoon. She came to quickly, coughing as the raw liquor burned her throat, and for long moments she lay in stunned silence, clutching in both of hers, the hand of the man who sat upon the side of her bed. Finally she spoke, haltingly, afraid—

"Is he—has he gone?"

And Brian answered without meeting her eyes—

"Yes, Annette, he has gone."

And as she felt his strong fingers close tightly upon her own, tears came, and in the little room the sound of her muffled sobbing blended with the incessant ticking of the cheap little clock on its shelf.

TO BE CONTINUED

A Rival *of the* Borgia

By F. R. BUCKLEY

IF IN the past sinners took—as they take today—a certain pride in the quality of their wickedness, there must be several feminine ghosts who resent the outstandingly evil reputation accorded to Lucrezia Borgia; especially, one would imagine Frances, Countess of Essex in the reign of James the First. As a Messalina, she was certainly Lucrezia's superior; and as a murderess—judging by her one known case, that of Sir Thomas Overbury—at least her equal.

She had, to be sure, assistance in this affair; notably from Robert Ker, Viscount of Rochester, who was the king's favorite; but on the other hand Lucrezia could rely on her brother Cæsar and her still more powerful father, the Pope, and she lived in an age less censorious of murder than was England in 1614.

The countess, when she started forth to prove that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, was confronted by difficulties such as the Italian lady never knew; and she overcame them single handed. The viscount, though implicated throughout, did nothing of importance until the business was all over except the trial.

Overbury and he had been bosom friends. They had met in Edinburgh at a

tournament, when they were boys of twenty; and had remained inseparable even after Ker, of more obscure birth than Overbury, had gained a peerage to Overbury's simple knighthood. In 1611, when Rochester became infatuated with the notorious Countess of Essex, they were still so intimate that Overbury felt entitled to remonstrate with his friend; which he did at length, and in the plainest of plain words; quite unaware that he was signing his own death warrant. Rochester broke off relations with his friend; and indignantly repeated to the countess what Overbury had said—not omitting one particular word which has always been anathema to ladies.

So the countess decided to square accounts with Sir Thomas Overbury; a matter more easily decided than accomplished. In the first place, the victim was in the habit of traveling on the Continent; and even when he was in England, he was not accessible. That had to be altered; and the countess proceeded to alter it by arranging that the king should offer Overbury the embassy to Russia, which she knew he could not possibly accept. When he refused, she further arranged that the refusal should be represented to the king as a personal insult; and that his Majesty should choose to avenge the affront by committing Sir Thomas to the Tower. This part of the business took her two years; but no doubt she was enjoying herself.

However, Sir Thomas, though imprisoned, was still alive; and Sir William Wade, Governor of the Tower, was a man to protect his prisoners from their enemies as well as from their friends. The countess spent much time and trouble in arranging that he should be replaced by a less scrupulous friend of hers—Sir Gervase Elwes. He, in return, obligingly appointed to the care of Overbury a new jailer, who chanced to be "well acquainted with the power of drugs"—and particularly, it seems, with the power of the drug known as copper sulphate. He was supplied with this chemical by an apothecary's apprentice named Franklin, who worked under the orders of a professional poisoner named Mrs. Turner, and he dutifully administered it to Sir Thomas until the knight died.

This also was a slow business—five months—which doubtless seemed much longer to the victim, who was in exquisite and increasing agony all the time. So at last the countess, losing patience, had him dealt with more violently. A pillow figured in this, and it was a mistake. Suspicion arose, and kept on arising until, fourteen months after Sir Thomas's death, it was found necessary to arrest the countess and the viscount—they had married in the meantime; and to hang Elwes, the jailer, the apothecary, and Mrs. Turner.

As widow of a physician, and one of the few successful business women of the period, Mrs. Turner kept up appearances to the last. She was hanged in a large ruff; and it is said that her choice of colors killed the fashion for yellow starch.

It was at the trial of the two principals that Robert Ker proved his usefulness. There was no doubt as to his guilt—in fact, he had confessed; but before sentence was imposed, he told his judges that if he were goaded beyond a certain point, he would say certain things which his Majesty the King would prefer to have unsaid. He just warned them; so effectively that they forthwith stationed at his sides two soldiers armed with large cloaks; whose function was to "fall upon the said Viscount Rochester if he said anything, and to hoodwink him so that he could not be heard."

And my lord and his talented wife were not hanged, but merely ordered to retire to their estates—as certain criminals have done in our own day. And that was the end of that.

Except that when one learns that the viscount's exile was sweetened by a pension of four thousand pounds a year from the Privy Purse, one really wonders what King James thought he might have said.

SPIDERLEGS

by ARTHUR O. FRIEL

BONS dias, senhor! Good morning! Yes, I am back, after another day and night out in the forest. And I bring you another new monkey for your museum collection. This time it is a spider monkey: a *coaitá.*

If you will open that cage so that I can let him out of the bag . . .

There he is! An excellent specimen, and a handsome fellow, too, as *coaitás* go. Notice the healthy thickness of his black hair, the length of his tall body and slim limbs, the size of his strong tail—a fifth leg, that tail is—and amazingly quick and powerful in clutching a bough. But, above all, observe the intelligence in his brown face and the mild look in his eyes. If you do not wish to kill him we can soon make him a very likable pet. He is still young, and so can learn.

Como? But no, *senhor,* you have misunderstood me. It is true that I told you recently, when I brought in that scarlet faced *uakarí* yonder, that monkeys were

A Most Unusual Story of a Man-Monkey of the Amazon Jungle

by nature cruel and vicious. But then I spoke of monkeys in general, and of the *uakarí* in particular. There are exceptions among monkeys, as among men. There are tribes of monkeys, as of men, which have more brain and heart and soul than most of their kind. And here in our Amazon jungle the *coaitá* is the highest of his species; higher, in truth, than certain tribes of Indians, such as the marauding Murás and Parárauátes, who forever kill and steal, and so must be shot at sight. This monkey can learn quickly that slaying and theft are wrong, and can understand other lessons of decency. I have seen more than one man who could not.

But pardon me, *senhor*. A monkey is a monkey, a man is a man, and in your United States of North America there is probably a great gulf between them. Here in our Brazilian forest the difference is not always wide. Indeed, one sometimes finds here a man who so closely resembles a monkey, both in body and in mind, that he seems to be a monkey. In this great wilderness are those who prefer the companionship of monkeys to that of any human within their range of knowledge.

Si, senhor! That is truth. But it is also true, as you say, that no child can be born which is half monkey and half man. At least, I have been told so by another *scientifico* like yourself, who was here some years ago; and whatever you scientific gentlemen say must be correct. Once I met a creature who was so much like a *coaitá* that—well, he caused me to argue with my partner . . .

Thank you. A little cup of rum does no man any harm after a hunting trip in the swamps.

Now, at the time of which I was speaking, I was out on a canoe voyage with my chum, Pedro Andrada, on the Rio Jutahy, which hardly any one knows. It was there that we encountered this *coaitá*-like man.

We were paddling down that river simply to see whatever we might see. It was the flood season, and we had come over to the Jutahy by way of the back bush from our own Rio Javary, seeking a change from the monotony of waiting for the rubber business to start up again. Already we had found enough adventure on the new stream to make us lame and languid. But, being a pair of young fools, we looked for more. And more we found.

We had paddled lazily for a day or two down the muddy waterway, letting the current do most of the work of carrying us onward while we recovered from many small but painful hurts received in a recent fight. Most of the time the sky was dull with heavy cloud, and sometimes it belched rain. Yet early and late in each day, after sunrise and near sunset, a break would come in the gray blanket and a ray of light would flash out over the forest and the stream. And Pedro, a rather fanciful fellow, would call it a bright finger beckoning us on to something new.

When we reached the place where that random beam had rested, though, we saw only the same old things: dark jungle, wet leaves and ground, dreary water stretching away toward the far Amazon. True, we did find good camping spots there, and fresh meat as well: a *mutum* turkey or a *jabutí* tortoise or some *tocanos*—toucans—which we killed soon after landing. But we could have found other places to rest and other creatures to shoot without the guidance of any sunbeam. And on

the third day, when I felt more vigorous, I complained:

"Your bright finger is a false lure, leading to nothing. And we are fools to follow it."

"Are you growing tired, Lourenço, old grumbler?" he gibed. "Have courage! In time we shall return to our dismal *barracao* on the Javary, where you can sit and spit at lizards."

I scowled. The picture was not attractive; and it was true. At that time of year there was nothing else to do on our home river, except to drink fiery liquor and then fight with our fellow rubber workers. And we had already done that sort of thing often enough to make it uninteresting. Thrashing men who are not so strong as yourself, even when they attack in numbers, grows wearisome after awhile, and does nobody any good.

"And," my partner added, "I feel in my bones that soon we shall find some new experience. Follow the finger another day!"

I spat over the side. But I pushed a little harder on my paddle. And we cruised on, looking for anything at all which could interest us. But we found nothing new.

Nowhere on all the dirty water did we spy another canoe, and nowhere on the banks did we notice anything worth looking at. The day dragged away, growing more dull overhead and all around, and not even the usual afternoon sun ray showed itself. Instead came a nasty thunder squall and more rain. Near night we landed at a poor spot, found no game, made an uncomfortable camp, ate cold victuals, and got into our hammocks without much talk.

Before I slept, Pedro remarked—

"You have offended the sender of our guiding light, Lourenço."

"Bah!" I growled, knocking a biting ant off one arm. "What of it?"

He chuckled in the dark, but made no reply. After killing a few more blood hunting ants, I fell asleep.

I slept soundly, undisturbed by anything. So did he. But in the morning, when we stepped lazily down to the waterside to wash our faces and fill our coffee pot, we came to life as if kicked . . .

Our canoe was gone.

WE HAD tied it well, giving it plenty of rope to allow for any sudden rise or fall of the water. That water had crept up only a few inches in the night. It could not have broken the cable. Still less could it have loosened the knot. But the dugout was gone, the hawser was gone, and there was no trace of the way of their going.

We looked hard at the overhanging branch to which the rope had been fastened. Its bark showed no cut, nor even the rub mark of strain. We looked at the wet bush and the wet ground, and found no sign that anything had come through the leaves or trod on the soil. Then we looked at each other, saying nothing. There was not much to be said.

We had our loaded rifles, our machetes, our hammocks, and little else. We were lost on the bank of an unknown river, without food, without means of travel, without knowledge of what lay ahead. We knew only that we were hundreds of miles from the Amazon, that we were hungry and growing hungrier, that we had only a few bullets and two long knives, and that we must start our journey overland at once. So we started.

Do not let any one tell you, *senhor*, that here in our equatorial country it is a simple matter to obtain food; that when one hungers he has only to pluck a banana or shoot some creature which appears just when he needs it. It is far otherwise. When a man has plenty of food in his canoe, much more can be seen while he travels—flesh, fowl, fruit, here and there along the shores. Let him lose both boat and provender, and at once all nourishment vanishes. No animal nor bird—no, not even a toad or a snake—can be spied. And he fights on through the dense wilderness until he first goes mad, then falls and dies.

Many a man has died so in our bush. So will many another. Men with full

guns and full belts, but with nothing to shoot at. Men well acquainted with the forest, but starved by that same forest until their bodies became food for the roots of its trees.

Now we rolled our hammocks, hung them on our shoulders, and trudged away along the bank, chopping our way through a network of brush and vines. The going grew worse as we advanced. We met thickets of thorns and had to make laborious circuits around them. We found swamp holes in which lurked venomous snakes, and had to avoid them also. We came to dark, dismal creeks and had to swim across them with one hand, keeping our guns above water with the other, and expecting at every stroke the horrible attack of *jacaré* or *sucurujú*—crocodile or water serpent—or the paralyzing shock of an electric eel. Having reached the farther shores unharmed, we had then to resume the toil of advancing foot by foot through more of the *mato*—the jungle. It was not much like floating down the open river in our smoothly riding canoe. No, truly!

As we worked onward, the morning sunbeam remained hidden. Worse, rain came again and kept coming. And we saw nothing to kill for meat; so we went without eating, for all our travel food had vanished with the canoe. By the time we stopped to make a *tambo* in which to sleep another night, we were woefully hungry and tired, and not very cheerful.

We still had tobacco and bark and matches in our rubber smoke pouches. And when we had hunted near our camp for anything fit for food and found nothing, we made *cigarros* doubly thick and lay in our beds smoking them. After a time Pedro remarked, as if only to break the silence—

"I wonder what the thing is."

"What thing?" I puzzled.

"The thing which has been following us."

I frowned at him, looked quickly around outside the hut, saw nothing unusual.

"It has been with us since the middle of the afternoon," he went on. "Something I could neither see nor hear. But I felt it. Sometimes it was close. And I think it is not far off now."

He gazed at the near trees in an idle way. I did the same, not so idly. Whenever that sensitive comrade of mine felt something near, something was there; I had learned that in years of association with him. Yet, as I have said, we had just hunted the woods around us and found nothing alive. Nor could we detect anything now. After another puff or two I guessed:

"*Sassúarána.* A puma. They like to follow men. When darkness comes we shall light a fire and watch for the gleam of its eyes. I can eat half of it, without salt; yes, without cooking!"

He smiled, but shook his head. His expression showed that he did not believe the thing to be edible.

I got up and went into the bush, carrying both rifle and machete. He followed, walking carelessly, but armed with his gun. As before, I found no animal nor bird. But I found firewood: dead wood which, after the wet bark was sliced away, would burn readily. This we carried back to the *tambo.* When night fell I lit a fire.

NO EYES shone in the outer dark. No snarl or cough or scream of puma or jaguar broke through the increasing noise of the night downpour. Inside our little shelter the blaze burned on between our hammocks, and from each side of it we watched the gloomy forest, rifles ready, waiting for the double round gleam which would give us a target for a quick shot.

But no such lights showed. Before long my eyes grew heavy and dull. They closed . . . opened . . . closed . . .

It was morning again. Wood smoke was still in the air, but with it was a new smell, the odor of something cooking. I sat up quickly, to find Pedro squatting beside the flames and feeding them with fresh sticks. Over that fire was a grill of other sticks—green ones—on which rested many small brownish lumps.

"*Como é isso?*" I demanded. "What's this?"

"Eggs," says he.

"Eggs?"

"Eggs."

I stared at the lumps. They were certainly eggs, each about an inch long, and all quite well roasted. They numbered about forty or fifty. Looking harder, and sniffing the air again, I knew just what they were.

"Iguana eggs!" I exclaimed. "*Deus meo!* Where did you find them?"

"Right here," he told me, pointing a thumb sidewise. On the ground near him was a large empty gourd.

"And you are wrong," he added. "They are monkey eggs."

At that I snorted. But I wasted no time in further talk. I got to the fire hastily, raked off my half of the food and gobbled it.

The first dozen went down almost unbitten. By the time I reached the twentieth, however, I was chewing quite deliberately. The rank oily taste proved my nose right. Beyond doubt the eggs were those of an iguana.

Now that big lizard, as you may know, lays its eggs in hollow trees, concealing them quite cunningly. And we had seen no hollow tree in all our past day. Still less had we seen anything which knew enough to make use of a gourd. So, when my last morsel was gone, I wiped my greasy mouth on my wrist and inquired—

"Since when has a monkey laid lizard eggs in a calabash?"

"Since yesterday," said Pedro.

"They taste much older than that," I complained, gulping down several which were trying to rise again.

"True," he admitted, also swallowing hard. "But I saw the monkey."

"When?"

"At daybreak. It stole up to this hut, watching both of us; set down the gourd, backed off, sprang behind a tree, and was gone. I watched it under my lids, without moving. It was a *coaitá*."

"Humph!" I scoffed. "A fine dream!"

"Maybe," he grinned. "But your belly now is full of the food left by the dream."

For that I had no answer. I looked again at the forest, which was dim with mist. Pedro stepped to a puddle of rain water and scooped up a gourdful. We both drank, and I examined the calabash. It was a common old *cuya*, scratched and stained, and ragged at the rim. On it was no decoration of wavy paint lines, such as is commonly found on the gourds of bush tribes. While I was still studying the thing, Pedro said—

"Perhaps if we should leave our weapons here and stroll around empty handed we might find our friend."

"*Pois bem*, let us try it," I agreed. "I am curious to see your queer animal."

So we made cigarets, lit them from the fire, and walked lazily out, smoking and acting as careless as we could. We left our rifles, but, as usual, carried our machetes at our belts. Pedro idled over to a large tree south of the hut. Together we strolled around it, looking into the cavities between its tall roots. This, I knew, must be the tree behind which Pedro's *coaitá* had vanished. But now nothing was there. The ground, though wet, was hard, and showed no footprints.

Down the farther side of the tall trunk hung a large vine. And I said—

"Your freak must have climbed that."

"I think it quite likely," he declared.

We peered up into the vague branches. If any monkey was there we failed to see it. The high, crooked boughs, the roof of leaves, the dangling *lianas* and *cipos*, all blurred by the fog, made a dull mass in which could be found no creature of earth or air. Yet Pedro murmured:

"Something watches us. I feel it."

"So do I," I admitted. "And it seems to be behind me."

We turned our heads, detecting no new shape. We walked on a little way, then came back to the house. All was unchanged. So then I said:

"Your lizard-monkey has gone, and we had best be going. It is a long way to—"

There I stopped short, and we both

wheeled. The dead forest suddenly bore life.

From a thicket just north of the *tambo* broke a noise of crackling sticks and shaken leaves. As we spun about to face it, out burst a long, lean, light man.

He sped toward us. We gripped our machetes, but did not draw them at once. The man was alone and empty handed, and turned his head as he came, glancing back.

On the ground just behind him, sliding after him, was a *jararaca* snake.

It came like a streak, vicious, venomous. It slid faster than the man could run. But he escaped it. He dived at our *tambo*, clutched the side eave pole, twisted sidewise with amazing agility, and was up on our slender roof. The slim poles cracked under his weight, but held unbroken.

Pedro and I leaped apart, dodging the snake, which still dashed on. We were barefoot, and we knew the mad thing would strike us if it could. We had no time to seize our guns. But we drew our long knives, and the instant we were safe we used them.

The snake stopped, snapped into a coil, lay looking about, confused by the sudden absence of feet in its path. At once we threw our blades. Both struck true, edges down. The bunched snake fell into several pieces and was harmless.

FOR a second we stood marveling. The *jararaca* is an exceedingly bad reptile, but usually it does not chase men. Why should this one have pursued the Indian? The answer came quickly: Because he had angered it by intruding into a spot where it was resting. And why should he have come there? And how many more men were behind him?

I scowled at the bush and stepped toward my gun. But before I could grasp it Pedro said quietly:

"Take it easy, Lourenço. The fellow on the roof is our friend."

With that he walked out, giving no further attention to the twitching pieces of the *jararaca*. He smiled up at the top of the hut and made motions. Soon the poles crackled again and the Indian dropped to the earth.

He poised there, ready for a dive back into the thicket, eyeing me. He seemed to have no fear of Pedro, who stood at ease. But it was clear that he was very wary of me—perhaps because my face was hard. It usually is. My life has never been soft, so my look at strangers is not soft either, especially when that stranger is an Indian in the woods. Probably I looked particularly ugly at that moment. Yet, after a straight stare at each other, both of us relaxed.

As I have said, he was unarmed and alone. And he did not glance at the bush as he would have done if others lurked there. And the moment he saw me grow looser of muscle and jaw he grinned.

It was a queer sort of grin; still half scared, but friendly. Moreover, it was a monkey-like grin. As I looked him over, I saw why Pedro had called him a *coaitá*.

His body was long and slender. Indeed, his arms and legs were so lanky that they gave him the spidery look of the spider monkey. And there was something very *coaitá*-like in his way of standing, stooped forward, arms hanging down before him, eyes watchful, body and brain ready for a spring aside or up. I had already seen the monkey-like speed with which he could leap away from swift death and snatch himself off the ground. And his face, with black hair hanging over the brow, was even more wild than his posture.

Yet his color was almost the same as our own. It was not only lighter than that of any monkey, but more white than that of many a forest Indian. And so was all the rest of his skin. For a few breaths I looked him up and down, wondering. Never before had I seen any one just like him.

Then, gruffly, I said:

"*Olá!* Hullo! Who are you?"

At sound of my voice he started back a step; then glanced quickly at Pedro, who still smiled. He made no answer.

"Softly, Lourenço," my partner cau-

tioned. "That growl of yours would scare away a jaguar. And this fellow does not understand you. Let me handle him."

With that he stepped to his hammock, sat in it, and motioned toward mine. The bush man hesitated; then came in and sat in my bed. I strolled over to lounge against a corner post, where our visitor could easily watch me. And then my comrade talked to him.

At first he used words, trying both our native Brazilian Portuguese and the Tupí *lengoa geral*, which is the usual language of the more advanced Amazonian Indians. But, though the queer fellow's eyes brightened at certain sounds, he made none in reply. After studying him a minute, Pedro inquired, by sticking out his tongue and making faces, whether he was dumb.

He was not. His answer now came promptly, and rather angrily. He spoke fast, in a chattering tone somewhat like that of a monkey. But his noises made no sense to us, though we knew several dialects besides the Tupí. It was clear, though, that he was speaking human words. So we knew that he must belong to some tribe so small and isolated that it had forgotten, or never learned, the languages in common use along the Amazon. There is more than one such tribe in our back bush.

After that Pedro made use of signs. He showed that we had come in a canoe from a place far away, that we had lost the canoe at night, and therefore had continued our journey on foot. The watcher now understood him perfectly. So, having explained why we were there, Pedro began asking questions.

The replies came quickly and plainly at first; then more slowly. By movements of arms and body and by facial expressions, the forest man told us that he had been out hunting on the previous afternoon, had spied us coming along through the jungle, and had followed to watch us. At night he had hidden near our camp, seen all we did, then gone away. Thus it was clear that he was the "thing" which Pedro had felt to be near us.

At daybreak he had come back, put the iguana eggs into the hut, and detected the fact that Pedro was awake and watching him. So he had gone up into the high branches, observed us from there, come down on the other side of the *tambo*, and stolen close to spy on us again. Then the snake, which he had not noticed at first because he was looking at us, had driven him out. As no tree or vine was close to him at the moment, he had bolted for the nearest refuge, our roof.

That much was plain. But when Pedro asked why he had followed us and fed us he could not explain. He only grinned foolishly.

"He was curious, and happened to like us," I said then. "Probably he never saw white men before."

"That is it, I think," agreed Pedro. "He is a good hearted simpleton. But be quiet. There are other things to be learned; and he does not like your rough voice."

The lanky creature was watching me again in a suspicious way. It was clear that he did not yet trust me much. So I lolled back against the post as before, and kept still.

AFTER that, Pedro asked where our new friend had come from, and where he had gotten the gourd. An Indian hunter does not, of course, carry a gourd around with him. He carries nothing but his weapons. Therefore this fellow must have gone home to get the calabash, if not the lizard eggs which he delivered in it.

To these inquiries the replies came much less readily. The long man looked at each of us with a sharpness which proved him not so simple as Pedro had called him. Then he stared out at the bush. At length he jerked his head backward, eastward, inland from the river.

The next question brought no answer at all. Pedro asked whether he knew what had become of our canoe. He sat without motion, as if he did not understand. But his expression proved that he did.

After a minute of waiting, Pedro turned to another subject. He tried to learn the names of the strange fellow himself and of his tribe. But he could not make these desires clear. The unexpected visitor showed that he was trying hard to comprehend what was wanted, and looked puzzled and distressed when he found that he could not. At length I said:

"Why waste time? Call him Coitá, or, still better, Spiderlegs. And tell him to lead us to his people. We may find food there."

"Or death," Pedro reminded me.

"Of course. But I would much rather die quickly, in a fight, than slowly, stumbling through this bush," I growled. "And so would you. And we came here because you wished to find something interesting. And we are most likely to find it yonder. If there is a whole tribe of people like this fellow I should like to see them. If not, I am always interested in eating or fighting. *Vamos!*"

"*Bravo!*" chuckled Pedro. "That has been my thought also, and I am glad that you have caught up with me. Now hold your tongue again."

I leaned back again and looked at Spiderlegs. On his face I found a new expression. It was not very pleasant. In truth, it was an offended scowl. Thinking back, I found the reason for it. He had heard us say *coaitá*, had understood the name, and had not liked it. Yet now, as I frowned back at him, he grinned in an apologetic way and dropped his eyes. His face said, as plainly as words—

"I may be like a *coaitá*, but how can I help that?"

And somehow I suddenly felt sorry for him, although I did not know just why. I realized, too, that I had shown no gratitude for the breakfast he had brought us. So I caught his eye again and grinned as pleasantly as I knew how. At once he became more cheerful.

Pedro stood up and, by the same sort of dumb show as before, told him that we would go with him to his home. At that he turned sober. He looked doubtfully at us, and uneasily at the bush. Then he sat gazing at the ground, thinking hard. All at once his face brightened and he arose. He moved his chin toward that hidden spot at the east. Then he walked to the thicket from which he had burst into our sight.

There he stooped, searched, straightened, and again came forth. Now he carried a bow and two arrows, which he had dropped in his plunge away from the *jararaca*. Holding these loosely, he stood waiting.

The bow was short and crudely made. The arrows were only sharp sticks, hardened by fire, with no heads or barbs. Scanning these, I realized that his people must be even more ignorant than I had thought. There is many a savage tribe here which can not speak any known language, but which makes excellent weapons. Indians who have not yet learned to tip their arrows with sharp teeth or bones are very backward.

We took down our hammocks, picked up our guns and machetes, and left the *tambo*. Spiderlegs led us away into the bush, turning quickly at times to look back at us, but showing no distrust; instead, he seemed to wish to make sure that we were following. Each time he met a nod and an encouraging sign from Pedro, who walked at his heels. I had taken the last place by choice, knowing that my partner could manage the wild creature best.

Before long we came into a path. It was very faint, and very crooked, and entirely empty; a *picada*, a hunters' trail, which evidently was seldom used. Along it we marched for some time. Then we found ourselves on a plainer track. This ran close to a creek, a deep, dark stream which was almost wide enough to be a river.

Beside this we proceeded for some little distance. Nowhere on the water or the shore was any sign of human life. But then a cove swung in before us, and in it we found three canoes.

They lay at the shore untied, but pulled up on the earth far enough to hold them firm. Two of them were crooked,

poorly made. The third was much better; straight, full bodied, neatly shaped throughout. It looked familiar . . .

Suddenly the sun flashed out, revealing every line and scratch on those three dugouts. At once we both muttered:

"Ha! There is our boat!"

Yes, that good canoe was our own. We could not mistake it, for it bore an unmistakable mark. Along its gunwale was carved a long snake, which Pedro had cut in the last rainy season. He was clever at knife work, and had amused himself for nearly a week of wet weather by creating that swift looking reptile.

Another look showed us that the craft was empty. The bundle of travel food and other necessities which we had kept under a rubber blanket amidships was gone. Not even our paddles were left.

We scowled at each other, then at Spiderlegs. He watched us narrowly for a second or two, looking uneasy. Then he glanced away and motioned for us to come on. We came. There was nothing else to do.

A few rods farther on we entered a cleared space. In the middle of it was a *maloca*—a tribe house. Both the clearing and the house were small and slovenly. The ground was cumbered with dead tree trunks and studded with stumps, all charred by fire. The building sagged sidewise, and its mud wall was full of cracks. And it smelled . . .

A LITTLE breeze had come with the sun and it blew straight toward us, bringing an odor that made my nose wrinkle. The people living there certainly did not keep their pen clean.

"Animals," muttered Pedro.

We stood a minute, looking about. We found no living thing. No man, woman, child, nor even a dog or a fowl, was in sight. Except for our queer guide, the place seemed deserted. Yet Spiderlegs himself was clean, and it seemed unlikely that he would fail to keep his home clean if he could. Moreover, there were two canoes at the port, besides our own. And neither of us believed that he was the thief who had stolen our boat.

"They have fled to the woods," I said presently. "Some one spied us coming and warned the rest. When savages know white men are coming with guns they always do one of two things: attack them or run from them. These have run."

We moved forward again. But, as we did so, we lifted our rifles to easier shooting positions and watched all.

Yet we walked blindly. We had almost reached the little door of the house when men arose. The dead trees and blackened stumps suddenly sprouted Indians.

Without sound, they were there where no life had been. They were on both sides of us and behind us. They held bows with arrows on the cords, all aimed.

"Trapped!" I groaned.

We halted. Pedro and I snapped our guns to our shoulders, though it was much too late to save ourselves with them. But the Indians did not shoot. Nor did we. Spiderlegs stopped that.

He yelled shrilly, and kept yelling. The naked brown men stood still. They scowled at him, and one answered in a snarling tone, while others sneered without words. But he continued his rapid noises, and soon they took effect. The bows slowly sank, and the arrows pointed at our feet instead of at our stomachs.

We let our guns droop, though we kept fingers on triggers. Spiderlegs still talked, his tone a queer mixture of anger and anxiety. The faces before us grew somewhat less threatening. Then, slowly, warily, the listeners moved toward us.

They came with short, stiff muscled steps, watching us intently, ready to dodge and shoot if we made a menacing movement, but willing to let us live longer if we did not attack them. Having faced savages before then, we could read the faces of these people, and could see that at heart they were afraid of us—and the more dangerous for that. Scared men, like scared animals, are sometimes far more deadly than those who are fearless. And these men had not much more brain

than the wildest beasts of the jungle.

They were not at all like our long, spider limbed friend. All were short, squatty, thick of arm and leg; all heavy faced, small eyed, low browed. And the difference between them and our guide was not only in shape and size; their skins were darker, their eyes duller, their mouths harder, their expressions more cruel. They seemed men of an altogether different breed.

They came to a stand several feet away, herding close together, watching us with the same narrow stare, but holding themselves more easily. They numbered perhaps fourteen, and were near enough to feel that they could overwhelm us by the mere weight of their bodies if we should start a belated attack. We started none. We simply stood still and watched them as before.

While we stood facing one another, each party waiting for the other to do something, the lanky fellow who had brought us there took the next move. He made a few more noises at the Indians, then touched Pedro's shoulder and motioned toward the low door of the house.

"We are invited to enter," my partner quietly told me. "Let us go."

I still kept my eyes fixed on the forest men. The thought of turning my back to them did not appeal to me. But neither did I wish them to think I feared them. So, after a moment of hesitation, I swung around and followed my companions, walking with my best swagger, but expecting at every step to feel the sudden stabbing pain of arrows.

None came. We stooped through the little entrace, straightened inside it, and looked around.

DIMNESS and smoke and stale smells were our first impression. Then we saw a small fire and a huddle of women and children. The fire burned low in the middle of the place; a dull, smoldering collection of coals and charred wood and ashes, which evidently was kept alive at all times. The human creatures were bunched against the farther wall, all staring, all naked. The smells came from them and from all the rest of the house; odors of unwashed bodies and of an earth floor soaked with the filth of many dirty years. We grunted in disgust and breathed short.

But Spiderlegs, the clean fellow of the high forest, seemed untroubled by the rankness of the dirt dwellers. He went straight on, as if used to it. And after that moment of looking about us we followed him.

He led us to a low bed of sticks, a few inches higher than the floor. On it lay a woman.

"*Por Deus!*" muttered Pedro. "She is white!"

Compared with the others, she was indeed white. She was old, hollow eyed, scrawny, feeble, and not too clean. But her skin was almost as light as ours.

We stared at her, wondering whether she was really Portuguese or of some very light forest nation, such as the Passés, who, as you may know, are the lightest and most intelligent of our Amazonian Indians. For the moment we could not decide. But it was plain that she was no more a member of the dirty brown tribe than was our Spiderlegs. And we saw also his main reason for leading us to the place. She was his mother; and he, who had been so interested in us that he had followed us and fed us, had decided that she, too, would like to see us.

To her he now grunted several times. Into the dull old eyes staring up at us came slow life. The first faint gleam grew into intense flame. It was still growing when we both wheeled away from her.

The squatty men had come up close behind us. We felt them and smelt them before we heard them. They now stood, grinning in a nasty way, muttering short words to one another, but holding their weapons carelessly. They were looking, not at us, but at the old woman. And their sneering grins were for her; the grins which cruel people usually give to one who was once better than themselves but who has fallen on evil days and ways.

"*Brancos!*" suddenly spoke a hoarse voice behind us. "*Brancos!* White men!"

We turned back. The woman was sitting up now. And her face was that of one who looks on angels.

"*Bem!*" responded Pedro. "Right! We are white men. And who are you, and how did you come here?"

She made no answer. She sat there, rigid, holding herself upright with trembling arms. Her wide eyes still shone with that strange light; and on her lips came a wondrous smile.

Then suddenly her face went blank. She fell back, every muscle in her skinny body gone limp. She was dead.

She had been near death when we came, and the thrill of beholding white men had been too much to endure. Perhaps she believed herself already in the next world. At any rate, she now was gone.

We stared at her, forgetful of all else. And as we stood there, into our sight came another thing that made us stare wider. From somewhere appeared a *coaitá* monkey, which crept up on the miserable bed and stood looking at the corpse.

It was very old. Its limbs quivered as it hung there, gripping the sticks with weak hands and feet, steadying itself with a long tail curved around the rail. It gave no attention to anything but the dead woman. At length it moved nearer to her, put its head on her shoulder. Then it lay motionless.

The place was very still. Nobody moved or spoke. We all watched. After a while I prodded the monkey with my rifle muzzle. He remained unmoved. He, too, had died.

Pedro and I looked sidelong at each other and at our guide. He stood dumb, dazed, watching his mother as if he expected her to move again. To the aged monkey which had gone to death with her he gave no attention.

Then a harsh burst of laughter made the three of us jump and turn. The Indians behind us, who had sneered at the woman alive, now were ridiculing her as she lay dead. The sight of her lying there lifeless tickled their brutish minds.

But they did not laugh long. Our Spiderlegs, who had been so friendly and docile with us, suddenly turned killer.

HE VOICED a mad howl and shot his arrows. Both of those sharp sticks pierced the bellies of brown brutes, who fell writhing. Then he sprang forward, huge hands clutching at throats.

We, too, leaped at once into battle.

That yell of his, and the malicious laughter of the unwashed savages at the light woman, and our anger at them for stealing our canoe, all exploded something in our brains. We went crazy. We wanted the blood of those beasts. And we got it.

We fired our guns into the nearest men. Then, like the furious fools we were, we dropped those rifles, with cartridges still in the magazines, and attacked the rest with our machetes.

For the next few seconds we fought so fast that everything was blurred. There were yells and screeches and groans and the stench of gushing blood and gashed entrails. Then we were standing and gasping for breath, with nobody left to assail.

The doorway was darkened by shapes which struggled to get out. They screamed and struck one another and scuttled through the opening as best they might, plunging toward the forest. They were the women and children, who had bolted when they saw their men falling.

We let them go. Very soon they were gone. We two stood in a house almost empty of life. On the floor, Spiderlegs was finishing his fourth man. As we watched, the victim died.

After mortally wounding two of the brown men with his arrows, the lanky fellow had throttled another pair at the same time, holding them from escape by the grip of his spidery legs and choking out their lives with his powerful hands. In the same time we had killed seven more, shooting two, knifing the others. Their bodies lay all around us. The rest had fled.

We had jumped at them so suddenly,

struck so rapidly, that our unready enemies could do nothing with their bows. So we were unhurt, except for a few scratches caused by wild stabs with the arrows. And now we were masters of the place.

Spiderlegs sprang up, glaring around for more men to attack. His lips were drawn back, his eyes glassy and bloodshot, his whole face full of fury. When he found no Indians left standing, he looked confused. With a movement very like a monkey, he passed one of those killing hands over his eyes; then stared around again.

"It is finished," said Pedro, making a motion which meant the same thing.

The gaunt man gave him a quick glance, looked more carefully at the dead men littering the floor; and then, as usual, grinned. But this time it was not a pleasant grin. It was more like the grimace of a jaguar which has tasted blood and still hungers. He looked at the door, as if about to dash to it and pursue the men who had escaped. But then he turned and stalked to the dead woman. There he stood gazing down at her and her ancient pet.

Pedro touched my elbow. We sheathed our red machetes, picked up our rifles, ejected the spent shells. Then, with guns in hand and live cartridges under the firing pins, we walked about, seeking our stolen goods. From time to time we glanced at the door, and once or twice at our lean friend. The opening showed no returning shape. The slim Indian had sunk to a squat, and was slowly rubbing his bowed head with both hands. So we gave all our attention to our own affairs.

We found our cartridges strewn all over the floor. They had been given as playthings to the children, since the thieves who had brought home our canoe had no guns in which to shoot them, and, perhaps, did not even know their use. Our paddles were leaning against the wall, beside some others, far less well made. Our rubber sheet lay on a stick bed trimmed with bright feathers, which probably had been that of the chief man. Who he was we did not know, but without doubt he now was among the corpses on the floor; for the chief of an Indian tribe here must always be the first to fight and the last to run. Otherwise there is soon a new leader. Savage men will not long obey a coward.

In short, we found everything except our own food; and there was other food to take its place. We loaded the *aturas*—the baskets, you comprehend—with everything edible. And so we stood there ready to go, and speedily went.

Pedro walked over to the slumping Spiderlegs and spoke quietly. He looked up, then stood. Pedro motioned outward. Our odd friend turned for a last look at the two corpses on the sticks. Then he stepped to the nearest dead man, took his bow, and walked among the others, collecting arrows. After that he lifted one of the baskets to his back, slipped the carrying band over his brow, and started for the door.

He spoke no words and gave no look behind him. We slung our own loads and followed. At the exit he paused a second, scanning the near woods. Then he went on, with us close at his heels. All three of us watched the trees around us, but found no enemy.

Down a narrow path we marched to our canoe. We got into it, set down our burdens, shoved off. Spiderlegs had not brought any paddle, so he sat on a basket and watched, with arrow ready on strings. And so we rode down the creek and away.

Afterward I thought about his failure to bring one of the paddles from the house, and understood it. He was not a river man. He was an earth man, a tree man, not a water man; so, though he knew we were going to the river, he had not even thought to do what we did without thinking—to take with him the means of traveling on that river.

We both understood, too, the matter of the theft of our canoe, and asked no questions about it, then or later. The story was clear enough to our minds. Some of the squatty savages had come down the Jutahy behind us, probably

returning from a hunting trip in one of their slovenly dugouts. Perhaps they had spied us from behind and had been trailing us. At any rate, they had seen our good canoe and its load beside the bank, and had sneaked it away while we slept. They had lacked the courage to enter our *tambo* and murder us and take our guns, as many other savages would have done. But, by leaving us without boat or food, they had abandoned us to a fate more miserable. And if the luck of the bush had not brought the hunting Spiderlegs to us we should probably have perished. Certainly we could not have found that distant cove and recovered our necessities of travel.

BUT NOW, with our solid wood shell under us and the river ahead, we gave no thought to what might have been. We stroked fast to the Jutahy. There, well out in the stream, where no arrow could reach our backs, we paddled more lazily. Before long we ceased work together. I let my paddle drag. Pedro laid his across the bow, turned, and sat loafing and looking at our passenger. So we drifted, and nobody spoke.

Spiderlegs remained hunched on the basket, staring up the river. He was facing me, but did not see me at all. His mind was back in the *maloca* which had been his home. I read that much in his sober face and vacant eyes. Pedro could see only his back; yet, perhaps, he perceived more than I. After we had floated for some time he said—

"A good fellow, Lourenço."

"Aye," said I.

"And of a totally different birth than those worms yonder."

I nodded.

"And the question is: How did he get here?"

I shrugged, saying nothing.

He, too, was silent for several minutes. He made a cigaret very carefully, but did not light it. When it was finished he only held it between his fingers, and sat gazing again at our silent companion.

"I remember a story," he said at length. "Old Jorge Cardozo told it one night when we were all drinking at the town of Remate de Males, in the last wet season. Do you recall it?"

I did not.

"Well, about twenty years back a trader, whose name I forget, came up this Jutahy," he went on. "And he had just married a girl of the town of Olivença, which, as you know, is on the Amazon, between this river and our Javary, and in the country of the light skinned Passé Indians. The girl was probably a Passé, though old Jorge did not mention that. Anyway, that trader brought his new wife in here with him. And neither of them ever came out, nor ever was heard of again."

"He was a fool," I said. "No sensible man takes a woman into this back bush, even if she is Indian."

"Of course," he agreed. "But that is not the point. They came in here, and that was the end of them, as far as the story goes. But now let us carry that story further.

"The trader was killed. His woman became the captive of savages. She hated them, despised them, never found among them one whom she could like. So she took a *coaitá* monkey as her companion. The *coaitá* is, as we both know, more intelligent than any other kind of monkey, and so is most often made a pet by the people of the Amazon. And the affection of that creature probably was all that enabled that girl to keep on living. Without him she would soon have died of despondency."

"More than likely," I admitted.

He said no more for a minute or two. He sat looking once more at our Spiderlegs, who still gave us no attention. I too looked at the slender forest man, but I did not see him well. Instead I saw certain things which might or might not be true and, in any case, were dead.

"I seem to remember some of that story now," I said, before he could go further. "And I think Jorge said the trader was tall and thin, with very long arms and legs."

"Perhaps so," he conceded, with an odd look. "Though, if he did, I have forgotten it."

"I am quite sure of it," I asserted. "And we do not know that he was killed immediately after coming up here. He may have lived for years among these people, a captive, like his wife."

"True. He may," nodded Pedro. "But in that case would he not have taught his son to speak the tongues of the Great River, and many other things known to the outside world?"

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," I argued. "Perhaps he lost his reason before the son was born. Perhaps the mother, too, went mad. That would be more than likely. And then the boy would grow up as best he could, learning only the things known to the ignorant creatures in his own *maloca*."

Again my comrade was silent. He took a match from his pouch and set fire to his cigaret. After a couple of long puffs he admitted—

"It may be as you say—though this fellow does not look twenty years old."

On that point he was quite right. Spiderlegs could not have lived more than seventeen years. He was fully grown, yes. But in this hot jungle children become mature at twelve, or even earlier.

"Let it be just as I say," I retorted. "I know what is in your mind, and I refuse to believe it. For all we know, that trader may have died only a few days ago. As you yourself have said, the *coaitá* is often adopted by Amazon people; and both that man and his woman came from the Amazon. And, in any case, both the father and the mother of this fellow are dead. And the river is ahead, and we are on our way to something else! *Vamos!*"

I gave a stiff shove with my paddle. At the sudden jerk of the boat both my companions bowed. Pedro smiled, turned back to his paddle, and swung into his usual stroke. Spiderlegs showed a different reaction.

He stared at me, as if brought back from some far place. He looked over the side at the water and gripped his hands together. Then he glanced to right and left at the shores, half rose, sank down. His hands clutched harder. He shivered. Then he looked again at me.

I SMILED. At once he grinned and relaxed. His brown eyes showed that he trusted us, as before. But soon they swerved back to the forest. It was plain that he wished to be there, with earth under him and trees above him, and not sliding helplessly down this ugly river toward something he did not know.

"We shall soon lose our passenger," I predicted.

"Yes," Pedro answered, over his shoulder. "I knew that. He is no water man. Shall we go ashore soon and give him his chance? I could drink some coffee, if I had a fire to heat it."

"So could I," I responded. "And there is a good spot just ahead, on his own side of the river."

So we landed at that place. Spiderlegs scrambled out of the canoe speedily. As soon as his feet felt the solid ground he stood straighter and grinned once more. But, for the time, he made no move to leave us.

He squatted, watched us make the fire and the coffee and, when the hot drink was ready, smelled and tasted it. But he drank almost none of it. After a sip or two he set down the cup, looked at it, ran his tongue along his lips; then arose, went to the water, raised a double handful of it and rinsed his mouth.

We snickered. He grinned, as usual, but looked again at the forest. Then he made motions to show that he meant to go hunting and bring us some meat. After that he strode to the canoe and seized his bow and arrows.

Pedro followed him closely and, before he departed, gave him the best gift we had. It was a long, strong belt knife, in its leather sheath. We always carried with us on a long trip a few extra knives, knowing, from hard experience, how easily such tools could be broken or lost;

also, how valuable they were for purposes of trade. To the Indian of the back bush a steel blade is more precious than gold or diamonds.

Spiderlegs took it with a joyous grin, spoke several of his queer words, motioned to the trees, and walked away. He faded into the thick brush and was gone.

For quite a long time after that we lounged at the base of a big *moratinga* tree. We knew well enough that the spidery woodsman would never come back, yet, somehow, felt that he might; and, just as we had given him his chance to go, we now gave him time to return. At last we picked up the coffee pot and the cups, stepped to our canoe, and took our usual seats.

"From the bush he came, and into the bush he went," said Pedro. "In the bush he was born, and in it he will die. And so it is best. Anywhere else he would be wretched."

"Exactly," said I. "I am a little sorry to lose him, for he would have been useful to us—a faithful fellow and a marvelous hunter. But in the end he would have become miserable. Outside he would be nothing. Here he can be king of his own little world."

"And he will be," Pedro declared. "If my memory is correct, only three men were left alive there when we came away; and they were the poorest of the lot, the ones who fled without a fight. And now he is on his way back to them with a fistful of arrows and a good knife, and with more cunning and strength and speed than all of them together. By tomorrow morning he will be the only man surviving there. And then—"

He broke into a sudden laugh.

"*Valhame Deus*, is it not a joke?" he chuckled. "The son of the slave destroys the men who made her a slave, and becomes master of all who survive. The monkey man is the sultan of the *maloca*. *Caramba*, it is a jest of the jungle!"

"Jest, and just," said I. "The justice of the bush. But now are we going somewhere today, or are we not?"

"We are, old grump. I don't know where we go, but we go. Shove off!"

I shoved.

The Jutahy grasped our boat once more and crept away with it and with us. The sun still shone bright and hot. And so, while our suddenly found and soon lost friend stole homeward among his native shadows, we swung away on a flood of water, in a flood of light, and were gone forever from his life.

Since then, as I said at the beginning, I have sometimes wondered . . .

Como? Did you say that if the child were raised with that monkey, it might acquire some of the traits of a *coaitá? Veja lá!* That may explain it all.

Yes, thank you, I could stand another little drink. And I could stand a large one twice as well as a small one. A man's throat grows dry . . .

The Passing of Uncle Joh-on

Another Engaging Tale of Old China

By JAMES. W. BENNETT *and* SOONG KWEN-LING

NING-VAN, be it said at the outset, was a rascal. He kept well within the law, when the eyes of Peking's police force were leveled in his particular direction. But, when the official glance was lured away, he moved swiftly to the narrow margin between high finance and actual theft, which he successfully straddled.

In his more law abiding moments he sold bonds for small, combined, lottery-insurance companies which are ever popular in China. But, whenever opportunity availed, he was not above purveying the bonds of corporations either defunct or non-existent.

Outwardly, Ning-van was a smiling, rotund man with an infectious laugh. The denizens of Peking instinctively had confidence in him, even after he had succeeded in swindling them most unmercifully. For he would persuade them to forget their losses of twenty-five or fifty dollars, in order to commiserate with him who, it would appear, had lost thousands in that selfsame venture.

Two men, however, failed to display this perfect confidence in Ning-van. Mr. Daung, owner of a curio shop in Pewter Lane, and Mr. Daung's elderly servant, Wu, had run afoul of the smiling crook.

Too shrewd himself to intrust money to Ning-van, the shop owner had stood by, helplessly expostulating, while Wu made the plunge. When Ning-van returned later with the usual story of failure and of his own losses, Mr. Daung curtly showed him the door.

A council of war was held that night in the Daung household.

"Do you think I could get my money back by going to the courts about it?" asked Wu.

"'If you sue a beggar, you catch a louse,'" quoted Mr. Daung in reply. "No, I'm afraid you will have to take your loss. I will make up as much of it as I can, from my own purse. But there is one thing we both can do . . ." Mr. Daung hesitated, his mouth grown like twin lines of steel.

"What is that, master?" asked Wu eagerly.

"We can muddy the pool and spoil Ning-van's fishing in this particular part of the city!"

THE TWO men set to work with such a hearty good will that Ning-van's stock in trade, bonds, insurance, and similar crisply drawn-up papers, languished alarmingly. Lane after lane became closed to him. Fat, juicy neighborhoods with trusting shopkeepers actually, as well as metaphorically, barred their doors against him. For the first time in years he began to feel the pinch of poverty.

Ning-van began to brood over his repeated failures. Anger bubbled and boiled in his heart. Almost before he realized it, he was formulating plans of revenge. Each occupied itself not only with the disgrace of the curio dealer but with methods by which he, Ning-van, could gain many taels of silver in the bargain. With Mr. Daung's ruin, the servant, Wu, would also be scored off for his share in the persecution . . .

One by one, however, Ning-van discarded these schemes. Some were not practicable; others were too dangerous. Then chance threw the perfect plan in his path.

Sauntering through the purlieus of the southern part of the city near a large, open drainage canal, he saw, on the opposite bank, a crowd collected. Crossing by a small footbridge, he wormed his way deftly to the center of the loudly talking throng.

There he discovered a shivering old man, clothes soaking wet and malodorous from the waters of the ditch. The man was gazing about him dazedly, with eyes only half comprehending. An excessively red nose testified to much stimulation of rice wine. The dilapidation of the ancient one's garments, on the other hand, indicated that he must have had little, if any money, of late, to gratify such cravings.

A moment after Ning-van arrived the derelict came out of his daze. Finding his tongue, he began to revile a strapping coolie energetically: "You fool, why did you pull me out of the canal? Can't an old, old man drown himself in peace—without you coming here and interfering? What have I to live for, you—you son of a turtle?"

"Easy, father," laughed the coolie. "If you call me any more names, I'll toss you back in."

"Will you? Will you? Is that a promise?" Whereupon, the old one began to discover stores of vituperation that set the crowd into gales of laughter and caused the coolie to frown uncertainly.

It was at this moment that Ning-van's scheme came, full blown, to him. He brushed resolutely past the coolie and grasped the old man by the shoulders. Lifting himself on tiptoe, he shouted in the latter's ear:

"Uncle Joh-on! What are you doing here, Uncle? I've been searching the town for days, trying to learn of your whereabouts. Only last night I invited some of your friends; we were to have a feast for you. I ordered your favorite wine—"

"Eh? What's that?"

"Uncle Joh-on" suddenly pricked up his ears.

"Triple distilled rice wine, *kan shao chiu!* The sort you like best, you know!"

SOMEWHERE in the befogged intellect of the old man, cunning bestirred itself. Wine! Caution began its prompting now not to deny the relationship. He had little to lose, whatever the turning of fortune's wheel.

"Did they drink it *all*—in my honor?" he asked quaveringly.

Ning-van laughed that jolly, confidence producing laugh of his.

"No! Not all! I would not allow them to. I saved a large jug of it, in the hope that I might discover you, even at this late hour."

"A large jug!" murmured Uncle Joh-on. "Nephew, I am yours. Lead me quickly to that— A large jug, you said?"

Two weeks passed. During this time, the inhabitants of the southern end of the city became accustomed to the sight of the dapper Ning-van solicitously piloting about a frowzy old man. The latter,

always slightly inebriated, was invariably introduced by the lottery salesman as his long lost uncle, Joh-on.

The two could now be seen, sitting by the hour in the tea houses. Ning-van would drink Dragon Well tea, but he always bought small pots filled with hot rice spirit for the pleasure and befuddlement of his new found relative.

Strangely enough, in spite of his having a sufficiency of Oriental wassail, Uncle Joh-on persisted in his wish to complete his act of the morning Ning-van had discovered him.

"I am only delaying—putting it off," he would observe fretfully.

A queer, almost pathetic wastrel he was, dwelling in the shadow of this desire to make his quietus.

Once, out of curiosity, the confidence man asked him why he still harbored the idea of suicide. "Uncle, I am giving you food. I have bought such clothes for you as my lean purse would stand. Wine—it has been yours without stint. Hasn't life become a shade more desirable for you?"

"You are not mistaken," agreed Joh-on. "But I have made a vow. Why, no soul that lives shall know. Yet—" he hesitated—"you have been good to me. Yes, you have been more than good to me. This much, therefore, I shall tell you, on condition that you never repeat it: once I—I badly used some one. That person died. I swore an oath that I should make the only restitution left me, that of taking my own life."

Ning-van nodded slowly. His ready imagination drew a picture of Uncle Joh-on drinking away the sustenance of a son or a daughter, and the latter, dying, perhaps, of starvation. Perhaps! For, even in his cups, when he babbled aimlessly, the old man never again alluded to the matter.

AT LAST, one cold raw day, with the wind howling and a sleeting rain driving into unprotected shops, Ning-van decided that the time was propitious for carrying out his scheme against Mr. Daung. That night the streets would be bare, with his fellow men hovering over charcoal braziers indoors.

In the morning, Ning-van set about making final preparations. He carefully drew up a number of legal appearing papers. That afternoon, with Uncle Joh-on, he repaired to the Tea House of the Ten Thousand Songbirds. There, he waited for darkness to fall.

Ning-van's plans had been carried out with cold blooded thoroughness. Now, surprisingly enough, he began to feel acute twinges in the region that he had deemed pleasantly atrophied—his conscience. This was because of the part he was preparing to force Uncle Joh-on to play in the drama of retribution.

Ning-van tried to still the clamorous pain with thoughts of the sweetness of his revenge, the essential justice of the act. Had not the curio dealer hounded him from pillar to post, without mercy and without cause? It had not been Daung who had lost any money; it had been merely his servant.

Ning-van told himself all this repeatedly. Yet such reasoning was not able to satisfy him. At last, in desperation, he beckoned the waiter and changed his order from the usual tea to a flagon of spirits similar to the potation of the old man.

The confidence man was unused to the wine. It not only unlocked his tongue, but it caused him to talk in louder tones than he realized.

"To-night, Uncle, the execrable Daung will taste the bitterness of a thousand years of ruin!"

"And who is Daung?" asked Uncle Joh-on.

Ning-van laughed.

"Of course! Here I have been so busy that I haven't told you. Listen well. He is a fiend incarnate. He has robbed me of nearly all that I possess. In addition to stealing from me, he discovered where I kept the little spirit tablet of my father—ah—your brother, by the way. He took the tablet from its shrine—and burned it!" Ning-van began to warm

with the wine and to his story. "And, as if that were not enough, this Daung traduced the good name of my mother—your sister-in-law, by the way. Wouldn't you think these acts had satisfied him? But no! He is now hounding *me!* He endeavors to take away my poor means of livelihood. He warns people not to buy my bonds—which are as good an investment as silver sycee itself!"

"*Tchk! Tchk!*" clucked Uncle Joh-on in vague commiseration. "Why does he do all that?"

"Because once, years ago, I persuaded him to make an investment in a lottery—I put ten thousand taels in it myself. Unfortunately it went bankrupt. He lost ten taels. I lost ten thousand. Yet he never forgave me." Ning-van paused and reached for the wine. "But, tonight! Tonight, I shall get him! My plan is all arranged."

At that moment a stir came from a nearby table. A man rose and silently detached himself from a group of noisy tea drinkers. A moment later he left the teahouse.

SOME subconscious warning began to drum in Ning-van's ears. After that he lowered his voice as he went on:

"This Daung is a man with the heart of a crow and the rapacity of a scavenger dog. He—"

The blurred stare of Uncle Joh-on became fixed. "What do you want me to do?" he asked with unexpected shrewdness.

Ning-van was disconcerted. He had intended to elaborate for a considerable space longer on the various heinous qualities of the curio dealer, adding a few touches about the dealer's servant, Wu. Thus he hoped to gain his hearer's sympathy irrevocably.

"Well," he replied, "I—I have worked out a scheme. If it succeeds we shall give him such a fright that he will be absolutely in our power. You know, and I know, that a shopkeeper can never get over the disgrace of it—if a man hangs himself at that merchant's shop doorway . . ."

Uncle Joh-on started.

"All right! Go on, please!"

"So, therefore, I have planned for us to walk over to the house of this Daung tonight. There you will make the pretense of hanging yourself from the eaves. I shall let you down easy. I'll cut the rope before you come to any harm, and then I shall make a great outcry. I shall tell the neighbors that you have been ruined by Daung, that he has stolen all your money, that I knew of your purpose and followed to prevent it. I have drawn up all the papers to prove that you gave Daung ten thousand taels—"

"But I didn't give him any money!"

"I know! I know!" answered the confidence man impatiently. "But everybody will believe you. A man doesn't try to commit suicide unless there is some great, overweighing reason. You are demonstrating your wrong . . . Besides, you owe me something, you know, for having fed you and given you shelter. Not that I begrudge that," Ning-van added quickly. "Then, when we have finished making the little play public, I shall see to it that Daung gives me—*you*, I should say—I shall see that he gives you back the ten thousand taels he owes you—"

"But he doesn't—"

"Now, Uncle, have some more wine! Your wits aren't working well tonight!"

"Perhaps they're working better than you realize. However, I *do* owe a debt to you. It appears to be one that I have no other means of repaying." The old man shrugged. "Let me finish this wine. I—I shall need it."

AT THE moment when Ning-van and Uncle Joh-on were taking their last sup of wine preparatory to sallying forth, a knock sounded at the door of Mr. Daung's shop. The owner was away that evening, enjoying the birthday feast of a distant relative. His shop was closed; only Wu, the old servant, was on the premises. Wu opened the door and discovered the

frightened face of a servant from a neighboring shop.

"I was having tea," the servant began without greeting, "in a little restaurant, near here, the Tea House of the Ten Thousand Songbirds. I heard the rascal Ning-van—the man who robbed you last year—threatening to bring about the ruin of your master. And tonight was the time, he was saying, that he was going to do it."

"To whom was Ning-van talking?" asked Wu quietly.

"To the old man he calls his 'Uncle Joh-on'. The one who looks like a beggar, that Ning-van picked up, after he had been fished from a canal."

"Yes," answered Wu, "I've seen the old fellow several times . . . It's bitterly cold. Won't you come in and warm yourself a moment with a cup of tea? Or can I heat up some wine? The master will spare it gladly, I know; for you have done us a good service this night."

But the informer was shaking his head.

"No. Oh, no," he answered quickly. "I—must go." He looked about as if he feared that some one had followed him.

Wu understood the gesture. Ning-van was known to have a vindictive nature.

"No one shall know, my friend, of your warning, happen what may."

The other nodded and made off at a furtive trot.

The old servant stood at the door staring blankly into the night. By the promise just now given he had automatically cut off any opportunity of seeking aid from the outside. What was to be done? Should he go to find his master? Or should he stay, alone, to try circumventing that malign being, half devil, half man, Ning-van? What was the confidence man going to do? Bring a gang of hired bravos? If that were the case, it were better by far that his master remained away. Wu squared his old, work worn shoulders. No, he would wait—and do his best, alone.

THE WIND had risen to a furious gale, as the two conspirators reached the home of Mr. Daung. Night had fallen and Pewter Lane appeared deserted.

Uncle Joh-on commented on this:

"I'm afraid you will have trouble drumming up a crowd." Then he observed mildly, "Perhaps, if you shout loud enough?"

But Ning-van, his mouth a thin, hard line, paid no heed. With quick deftness he looped a small rope about one of the beams that jutted out from the gate. Making a noose he handed it mutely to the old man.

The latter took the rope, his eyes beginning to regain their former dazed look, and fastened it about his neck.

Ning-van placed in position a small box he had also been carrying. With shoulders that drooped, the other stepped obediently on this.

"Goodby, my friend," whispered Uncle Joh-on. "You have been good to an old man—although you stayed him a few weeks from his purpose."

Ning-van could not meet the gaze that was bent down on his. The other's words—with complete suddenness—had unnerved him.

"Uncle Joh-on," he began to babble, "take away the rope! I won't go on with this! Hear my confession: You said you wanted to die. I was going to let you. I wasn't planning to cut you down. My wish for revenge against this man who lived here—oh, it was making me forget everything. If you died in front of his door my revenge would have been complete. But no, I can't let you go on with it . . ."

Ning-van wondered later if Uncle Joh-on had heard him. For, before he could interpose a word or make a move, the old man had caught the noose more firmly under his ear and hurled himself into space.

There was a horrid, cracking sound, and then silence. Incontinently, Ning-van fled, never stopping to look back. No outcry came from his throat to sum-

mon the neighbors. It was constricted by a great, unreasoning terror.

AN HOUR later the wind rose to a still higher pitch. Against the door of the house came a dull, thudding noise. It was irregular, yet timing itself to the more furious gusts of wind.

Wu heard the thud and his heart suddenly began pounding. Was Ning-van, and his bravos, attempting to steal into the domicile of his master? If so, resistance, however puny, must be made. Wu drew on his old sheepskin coat and his rush sandals and went to the entrance.

The cause of the noise was immediately discovered. The corpse of a man, already growing stiff and cold, swayed ponderously in the gale, a grisly pendulum.

Wu was of a phlegmatic temperament, yet for a moment he felt his hair rising along the ridges of his neck, and his hands were tingling. Then he took a firm grip on his fears, remembering that the house had been left in his charge.

Methodically he returned to his room and searched for a sharp knife. With this in his possession, he came back and cut down the corpse of the old man, placing it against the side of the building.

Again he retraced his steps and picked up the lighted candle in his room. Sheltering the flame against the wind, he opened the door. Kneeling down, he cast the small beam of light into the distorted face of the man lying huddled against the wall.

For a moment no recognition came, so knotted were the muscles of the dead man's face. Then Wu began to mutter excitedly:

"It's Uncle Joh-on! It's Ning-van's accomplice! Now—now, now, what does it all mean? What does—?"

At this moment, enlightenment came. It was a move on Ning-van's part to disgrace Mr. Daung. The particularly poignant disgrace of a suicide at his master's gateway.

Wu wondered for a moment why Ning-van had not roused the neighbors. Perhaps, though, he had brought witnesses of his own rascally stamp to watch the suicide. Yet, the lane was empty. That was something to be thankful for. Wu's old eyes gazed up and down anxiously. Yes, the road was bare and desolate, peopled only with the dark sighing ghosts of the storm.

Would it be of any value to spirit away the body? Wu demanded of himself. Then he shook his head. No, for these same accomplices must have seen the act, and would be loud in denunciation if the body were removed. And if he failed to hide it safely, he and his master might both be accused of murder.

THEN suddenly Wu laughed, an incongruous sound in the stark night. A blend of hysteria and of relief was in the sound. There had just come to his mind a way he had once heard to circumvent this grim jest of fate. A perfect way. A way that, if used now, would discredit even the testimony of Ning-van and his witnesses! It would do more than discredit Ning-van's testimony: it would be a boomerang, rebounding upon the small lecher, driving him from Peking, if it did not land him in prison.

Again Wu moved into the house. He hurriedly rummaged through his master's clothes closet for what he was searching— a pair of new shoes with white felt soles, unsullied by mud or dust. These, he bore out to the silent, wind swept entrance.

Again he made a reconnaissance, and assured himself that no one was spying upon his actions. Then he swiftly removed the shoes of the dead man and drew on those of his master. To his intense satisfaction, the shoes fitted passably well enough to sidestep suspicion on the point. The worn, old shoes of the dead man Wu crammed into a small fire that he had been tending under his master's *kang*.

This accomplished, he left the house and went on a trot to the nearest police station, praying as he ran that none of

the neighbors would pass by and discover the body with a resultant hue and cry.

At the police *yamen* he roused a somnolent patrolman and brought the officer of the law to his home. As the two approached, Wu gave a sharp sigh of relief. Again the lane was deserted; the body lay in the position he had placed it.

"Sir," Wu said quickly, "the first thing I noted was that the body was brought here, even though I don't deny that it was hanging at our gate when I found it, and that I cut it down. It was brought here by some enemy of my master's."

"How do you make *that* out?" asked the policeman suspiciously.

"*The shoes!* He did not come here to commit suicide. Even if he took a rickshaw, he must have had to walk a few feet up the lane to the gate. And you see how muddy it is. No, he was borne here—already dead."

"But still I don't see—" began the patrolman.

"His shoes are unsoiled! Their soles are white!"

"Oh—" completed the patrolman. "Ah—naturally. I was just going to say the same thing myself."

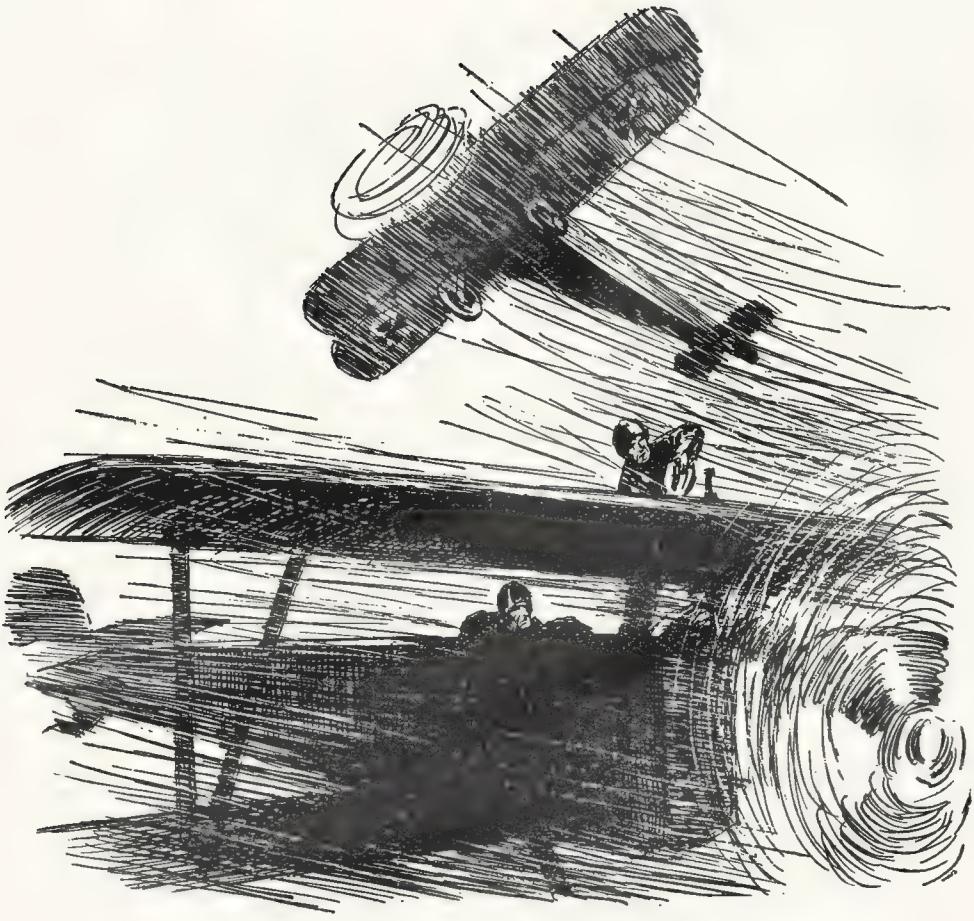
He thrust his lantern in the face of the dead man.

"See here, I think I know this fellow. In fact, I'm sure I do. It's that old uncle of Ning-van's. So! So this is some more of that villain's work, is it? Well, the consequences are going to be a bit more serious for him this time than in the past. Looks as if he has been speculating in murder instead of stocks and bonds. I've been looking for an excuse to—"

The patrolman checked himself and frowned portentously.

"Tell your honorable master to give his heart no burden over this affair. The burden will be saddled in another quarter. Quite another quarter, I assure you! Quite another!"

Still muttering, the policeman lifted the body to his shoulder and disappeared into the wind driven night.



The FALL of MAJOR SPAN

A Story of a Hard Luck Flyer

By H. P. S. GREENE

CADET AL SATTERTHWAITE sat on a bench outside the headquarters building at Shenannigan Field. The hot, muggy air of a Texas summer seemed to press upon his aching head with stifling weight, like water on a diver far below the surface, and the heat waves danced more crazily than usual over the sun baked level ground.

Inside the building his fate was being decided, for that morning he had crashed. The why and wherefore of the crack-up he did not know. He was not sick, and he had not been drunk. He had not lost his nerve, for he had not been nervous. He had no idea he was going to crash, for the

ship was all right. It just happened. He had not leveled off soon enough, and the ground came up and smacked him. His bruised and throbbing head was one result. Other possible results he did not yet know, but he was afraid.

He feared he might be taken off flying, the worst catastrophe which could possibly come to a flying cadet, young, eager for action and service, and not yet disillusioned.

Voices came to him clearly through the thin wall of the building.

"—and ground him," said the rasping voice of Major Span.

The drawling, yet incisive English tones of Captain Brown-Jones came in reply.

"Why? He's only had one crash. And the boy seems full of beans."

"Humph!" returned the acid voice of Major Span. "He has no discipline! No systematic accuracy! He made a serious mistake. Officers cannot afford to make mistakes in war time. He's not officer material. Poor at mathematics. Sloppy on the parade ground. He'll never be any good to the Army. Ground him!"

In the slight pause which followed, Cadet Satterthwaite trembled slightly with the faintness from his aching head, and with dread. He hated Major Span with his whole soul, as most of the other cadets did; and they knew why. He seemed to hate them; he hounded them over trifles and put obstacles in the way of their ambition—which was to fight in France. They did not respond to the treatment he had found successful with the prison battalion at Leavenworth.

"Give him another chance," advised Captain Brown-Jones.

He had a very annoying habit of giving advice, but really he was not to blame. That was what the British Government, at the request of the United States Government, had sent him to Shenannigan Field to do.

But Major Span hated him, just as he hated the cadets. Probably he could not have told why, for he was not a man given to self-analysis. All he ever analyzed were reports and promotion lists. Perhaps it was because the English officer had an air of graceful ease—although no one could have called him unmilitary. Major Span liked a man to have a ramrod up his back, just as he had himself.

Cadet Satterthwaite stood out among the other cadets for his popularity and his air of graceful ease; but no one could have called him military. Still, to call him sloppy was a libel on the part of Major Span. Satterthwaite's trouble was the unsoldierly ability of an athlete to accomplish movement without loss of effort or motion.

Somehow the English captain and many of the cadets gave the major a feeling of inferiority, which made him rage. He had no power over the captain, and the handiest object upon whom he could wreak his spite was Cadet Satterthwaite.

"Give him another chance," the Britisher was repeating. "He looks to me like he'd make a fighting pilot. Now in the Royal Air Force, when a man crashes and isn't too badly hurt we put him into another bus and send him up again immediately. If he makes it and lands safely, he's all right—a good man. If he's no good and lost his nerve chances are he'll kill himself, and that's as cheap a way as any of getting rid of him."

"Well, this isn't the Royal Air Force," remarked Major Span, repeating for the steenth time a fact which was only too obvious to the Englishman. "However, I'll just give him a month's kitchen police and confinement to the post. After that, maybe I'll give him another chance."

"But you'll break his spirit!" exclaimed Captain Brown-Jones. "Horrid job for a gentleman. Peeling potatoes and washing dishes don't make a flyer, what? Break his spirit!"

"We make 'em or break 'em in the United States Army," returned Major Span grimly. "Orderly, send Cadet Satterthwaite in."

Outside Cadet Satterthwaite stiffened. Break him, would he? He set his jaw.

Next day he commenced a month of peeling potatoes and cursing Major Span.

THE FOLLOWING summer, Satterthwaite, a lieutenant, found it necessary to keep his jaw set during most of his waking hours. He was on the Front in France, pilot in an observation squadron which was in the thick of the terrible struggle around the Marne.

He had lived through his month of K. P, through several flying schools and through tedious waits at various depots. And now, in the battle at last, he was determined to prove that he was some good to the Army.

After a hard morning spotting for the artillery, he snatched a quick lunch at the mess tent and hurried to obey the call of an orderly to go to squadron headquarters. His captain greeted him.

"Hello, Al. Good stuff this morning. More work for you now, and a worse job this time. G. H. Q. is up in the air, as usual. They think the Boches are planning another push. They have reports of a concentration around Vierzy-le-Petit, and now they want pictures. Somebody has to get 'em.

"It's a tough job, and I can't spare more than two ships from artillery work. And I can't wait to get *chasse* protection for you—the Marines are kicking now. Maybe if you slip in alone you might have more chance of getting by; and if you don't come back I'll have another ship to send, and it might catch the Fokkers down filling up with gas. But get back! I need the pictures, and I need you and Jimmy, too. But if I don't get the pictures I'm due for a ride. We get a new commanding officer this afternoon, fresh from the States and probably full of prunes."

"What's his name?" asked Satterthwaite.

"Major Span," was the reply.

Al went to the barrack and roused his observer, little Jimmy Morrow, who was just trying to settle down for a short nap, and together they went back to the line where the ships were waiting. Jimmy drew a camera and film and began to get them ready, while Al looked over their bus. The captain came toward them with more orders.

"The minute you get back with your films, fly over headquarters and drop the box with this 'chute. There's no place to land there, but they want the films to develop as soon as possible."

"O. K," said the two flyers. They climbed into their Salmson and took off.

As they gained altitude and neared the lines Satterthwaite thought over various schemes, for they had no orders how to get the pictures—just get them.

Of course the obvious thing was to get about ten thousand feet—a good altitude for pictures with the camera they had—charge across the lines to Vierzy-le-Petit, take a string of pictures and turn around and come back over almost the same ground. Not so good though, covering the same enemy ground twice. Everybody would be all set for them on the way back.

Or he might try to pull a bold and risky stunt. Rush across the lines at a low altitude, too low for Archie to get him triangulated, zigzagging so that the German Fokkers which would be warned of his approach would not be sure where to look for him, and take a chance on rifle and machine gun fire from the ground. When he was far back into Germany he could come flying back from a direction where they would not expect him, gaining altitude all the time, take his pictures and keep on going out. This scheme sounded good, but was very likely not to turn out well.

A third possibility was to fly around the salient at a safe distance from the Front until he was beyond his objective, then dart across and make one continuous, fairly straight flight over enemy territory to the side where his aerodrome was.

The pilot decided upon the last plan. It was about as quick as any, and seemed to hold out the best chance of getting back with the important pictures.

He crossed the lines at thirty-five hundred meters on the French altimeter of the Salmson, and made a wide, gradual

curve which would carry him over Vierzy-le-Petit.

A burst of black smoke greeted his appearance, but far below him. Another, nearer this time. Then—

Woof-woof-woof-woof! A battery had him bracketed. He nosed down with full motor to change his altitude and gain speed. The next bursts were above and behind. Then they started exploding closer again.

No time for any more finoodling. They were approaching the objective. Jimmy leaned over his camera, and Al held the ship straight and level.

There were anti-aircraft bursts all around them now. Plainly the Germans were shy, and doing all they could to discourage photographers. But the American plane, though rocked by the detonations like a ship in a sea, rushed on unscathed, except for a few odd rents in her wings.

At last Jimmy clapped his pilot on the back as a sign that the work was done, and Satterthwaite nosed her down again till the speed indicator showed well over two hundred kilometers an hour. And well he might.

BEHIND them was a flock of Fokkers, racing in pursuit. Ahead, near the lines, was a low patrol of American Spads. Their orders, however, were to keep to their patrol and try to protect the infantry, not rush to the rescue of stray observation planes. It was up to the Salmson to buck the game alone.

A minute more and the Fokkers were charging in. Their tracers whizzed by on all sides, ripping the cloth on the fuselage and wings. The roar of machine guns was continuous. Little Jimmy was fighting them off as best he could.

Then Al Satterthwaite knew that his observer's guns had stopped. The Fokkers swarmed around unmolested, there was a tearing pain in his left arm, another in his shoulder, and he threw the Salmson into a spin.

The world whirled and he felt faint and sick. After a while the clatter of the Spandaus ceased. Fighting his weakness, the pilot straightened out and tore through the air toward the American lines, which were close now, both ahead and below.

Then he looked back. The Fokkers had gone. He saw why little Jimmy's guns had stopped. The observer hung limply in his belt, and his head, lolling on one side, showed a small blue hole between the eyes. Poor little Jimmy! But he had taken the pictures, and he had died game. Now it was up to Al to get those pictures back.

He gritted his teeth, shook off his faintness, and turned his nose toward G. H. Q, gaining altitude until he had almost a thousand meters. Wanted pictures right now, did they? He would show 'em if he was any good to the Army!

Ahead was the little clearing at headquarters, much too small to land without cracking up, though he could have brought her down without any more serious injury to himself. But Satterthwaite did not want to crack up. He let go the controls, ignored the terrible pains in his left side and useless left arm, stood up in his seat and in some way managed to unstrap the box of film in the rear cockpit and throw it overboard as the Salmson went into another spin.

This time it was harder to bring her out; but he did, and saw the little 'chute and its hard won and costly burden drifting down toward the waiting hands below. The job was done. Now to get back and land his hearse safely.

The aerodrome was only a few miles away, but it seemed like hours before Satterthwaite could cut his gun and start to glide in.

Only a minute more now and he would be down. Hot sticky blood from his flaming arm was draining him fast, though. He wondered whether he were dying. The ground was close ahead and he tried to level off, but everything went black.

The crash brought his wavering senses back.

"Who is that man?" a rasping voice somewhere outside the tangled wreckage asked.

"Lieutenant Satterthwaite," some one replied.

"What? Is that clumsy lout still cracking up ships? Wanton destruction of Government property, that's what it is! The man has no discipline. No systematic accuracy. Makes mistakes. He'll never be any good to the Army. Ground him!" said Major Span.

Lieutenant Satterthwaite slipped away into a faint which was more protracted this time.

Three days later, as he lay in a hospital with his arm in a cast, Satterthwaite saw his captain coming through the door.

"Hello, Al," was his greeting. "How's she go? Going to be back among us pretty soon? Say, that was a great job you and Jimmy did. G. H. Q. was all hopped up over those pictures, and I thought I was going to work you and Jimmy's folks in for a D. S. C, but I couldn't get the recommendation by Major Span.

"He said you were an inefficient officer, poor at mathematics and slovenly at drill, and that you were always cracking up ships. Also that it was probably your own and Jimmy's fault that you got shot. And after what I said, hasn't he got it in for me! But never mind, maybe I'll get a chance to try for it again."

A few more words and he went out smiling cheerfully. He went to his death in the air next day.

IT WAS months afterwards when Lieutenant Satterthwaite turned up at the Air Service Depot at La Fracasse. His ordeal of suffering in the hospital with his expanding bullet wounds had left him hardened and bitter. He started like a man who has stepped on a snake when he saw that the commanding officer of the depot was Major Span.

There were various rumors about why the major had been removed from command of the squadron at the Front. One was that the higher-ups wanted a squadron commander who would lead his men over the lines. Another was that one of the officers of his own squadron had tried to shoot him down. A third was that he was afraid one of them would, and justly afraid, too. Any or no one of them might be true. The depot was a dumping ground for old and new, broken and stray, ships and men.

Nobody seemed to know what to do with Lieutenant Satterthwaite, and he spent much time in Paris, brooding gloomily over life across a café table on the boulevard. He was a stray and broken man, gnawed by a rankling hate. Nothing but dirty looks ever passed between him and Major Span. Now, indeed, with a stiffened arm and shattered nerves, Satterthwaite felt that he would never be any good to the Army.

The surgeons spoke of more operations on his arm—after the War when they had time. Then it would be too late, Satterthwaite thought gloomily.

Past his table the multi-colored throng swept along the sidewalk, talking, laughing, jostling—soldiers, officers, flyers of many nations, some of them with women —enjoying their brief leaves, and living them to the full. Then they would go back to the Front where other pilots, still unscathed, were fighting off death, playing with it, laughing at it, while the foot soldiers grappled, struggled and died in the bloody mud below. But all of them were living — while they could.

Satterthwaite felt that he scarcely existed. He, except in one respect, was like the one armed Frenchman who served him drinks, or the one legged one who opened taxi doors. They wore the *Croix de Guerre* and *Medaille Militaire* of honorable *mutilés*. While they lived no one would ever think that they had tilted with a sawmill, or been thrown from a speeding car. Satterthwaite set his jaw as a slash of tearing pain weaved its jagged way through the torn bones and muscles of his wounded side. All he had was his

wings, which proved that at least he had once flown.

Down the street he saw a familiar figure approaching, oddly-alien to the rest of the crowd, who were living, personally or with vicarious sympathy, through the frightful drama which was being played hardly a hundred miles away. This man was meticulous and wooden, in walk, dress and gesture; alone, aloof, self-centered, thinking about the promotion list, most likely.

It was Major Span. His eyes, always alert for salutes or failures to salute, caught Satterthwaite's wings, and then traveled over his face and figure.

"What are you doing here—er—Satterthwaite?" he asked.

"Nothing—er—sir," was the reply.

Span almost quailed before the venomous glare which met his eyes. He began to regret that he had not continued to leave this man alone.

"Have you no duties?" he persisted.

"No—er—sir."

"That's bad. You need something to occupy your mind. Report to my office at eight o'clock tomorrow morning," said Major Span.

He turned in a sharp and perfect about face, and left without waiting a reply. Something about Satterthwaite's replies made him nervous.

Next morning Satterthwaite reported to the adjutant. After two hours of waiting, he was admitted to audience with Major Span. The Major was again conscious that he disliked this man, disliked him even more than the ruck of his fellows, though he had never taken the trouble to wonder why.

"Can you drill a company of men, Satterthwaite?" he asked.

"No—er—sir."

"Have you an impediment in your speech?"

"No—er—sir?"

"Are you capable of assuming the duties of assistant adjutant?"

"No—er—sir."

"Satterthwaite, you never were any good to the Army, and you never will be. I always said so," triumphantly proclaimed Major Span. "However, I can't allow you to remain in idleness—bad for the morale. I will see if I can contrive a duty suitable for an—er—officer of your type. There have been two incidents lately of planes dropping wheels while in the air. Result, a crash which destroyed Government property. I must and will have systematic accuracy and discipline. I shall make you, as a commissioned officer, responsible for all wheels on all ships flying at this field. If any machine loses a wheel through carelessness, I shall charge you with negligence, incompetency and inefficiency! That will mean your re-classification, and removal of those wings, at least, and I advise you to see to your duties personally. That will be all."

"Yes — er — sir," said Satterthwaite, and went out.

This was the last straw. To be delegated to inspecting nuts and cotter pins, and crawling around the ships on hands and knees. It was a job that a sergeant would have scorned, and justly so.

For the thousandth time Satterthwaite pondered the sweetness of poking his good right fist into the nose of Major Span, and for the thousandth time rejected it. Lieutenants do not poke majors' noses in the Army. Assassination seemed good, but it had never been practised in his family. In some ways, Al was conservative. He set his jaw, and pottered about among the ships in the hangars and along the line, under the curious and grinning gaze of mechanics who tapped their foreheads, and muttered:

"Another one gone goofy. Or maybe it's D. T's."

THEN one day there was commotion around the Air Depot at La Fracasse. A great three motored triplane came sailing in. Its varnish glittered bravely in the sun as it glided softly over the hangars and settled to a landing.

Everybody crowded round. It was the nearest thing they had seen yet to a "battleship of the air." A giant Caproni,

built to carry enormous bombs, with a machine gunner ahead and one behind, guns pointing below through a tunnel in the floor and, strangest of all, a kind of fighting top for another gunner above the topmost wing. Some ship it was, pried by the Americans out of the reluctant Italians at a tremendous price, flown over the Alps and delivered to them at their own depot.

"Clear away from here. Put on a guard. She's too big to go in a hangar so tie the controls so they won't flap in the wind," ordered Major Span.

Who would be the one to fly the great ship, was the eager question which went round. Fuzzy had flown Capronis in Italy, but none as big as this. Charlie was an English trained Handley-Page man, a crack big ship conductor. And there were many other pilots almost as good who clamored for a chance.

"These pups have no discipline! No systematic accuracy! I'll fly the Caproni!" said Major Span.

The aerodrome was crowded early the next morning with people waiting to see the major take off. Besides the entire population stationed there, flyers who were in Paris with and without leave flocked to the depot. British and French pilots heard the news and gathered round to inspect the gigantic ship and watch it fly.. It was the biggest thing in airplanes seen near Paris thus far.

The three motors were well warmed, and the spectators breathless with the excitement of long waiting when Major Span strode forth at last. His uniform was regulation and perfect, even to his spurs. His cap sat squarely upon the center of his neat, close cropped head. His posture was erect and military, in contrast to the assorted flyers slouching about. Major Span was a monument calculated to put them all to shame.

He climbed into the pilot's seat and glanced around. The ship was sand bagged to give it weight in place of passengers. No one else should have the honor of making the first trip in the Caproni with Major Span.

At the last moment the major removed his cap, handed it to a subservient dog robber, and adjusted his helmet and goggles. Then he jazzed the motors.

Lieutenant Satterthwaite, who had just crawled underneath the fuselage to inspect the inner pair of the four wheels, eyed him with a sour eye. His lips moved silently, as if in prayer. But as the major waved to the mechanics to pull the blocks before the wheels away, he started like a man who has been stung. For underneath the ship he had just seen what no one else seemed to remember, and Major Span did not seem to be going to find out.

"Would Span really do it?" thought Satterthwaite. A wave of exultation swept through him, to be instantly rereplaced by one of dread. That beautiful ship to smash? No! Not even for the discomfiture of Major Span.

Satterthwaite sprang forward, waving his arms in the manner which means "cut the motor" the world around.

"Get back, you careless, undisciplined fool!" roared Major Span.

He jazzed the motors, threw them on, and Satterthwaite fell flat to avoid the Caproni's onrushing tail. Then he sprang to where an ambulance stood with engine running, its driver gawping from the hood where he had climbed for a better view.

The three big motors were roaring. The great Caproni rolled across the field, slowly and majestically at first, but fast gathering speed. It was off the ground. Every eye was fixed, and every neck was craned.

At twenty feet the big ship seemed to waver. At thirty it was wabbling noticeably. A murmur of fear rose from the crowd. The ambulance driver stood on precarious hob nailed toes upon the slippery hood of his machine to see. At forty feet the Caproni shuddered, stalled, and dashed into the ground. Shining wires and varnished struts sang sparkling through the air.

"A-a-a-a-a-h!" cried the mob, like

children watching the rise and burst of a skyrocket.

Major Span had taken off with tied controls!

Some one shoved the driver off the hood of the ambulance on to his neck, leaped into the seat, threw in the gears and rushed away. The driver scrambled to his feet and followed with the crowd, but he was left behind as his machine rolled into the cloud of dust.

Under the wreckage Major Span lay and cursed, language improper for such a perfect officer to use. He heard the meat wagon arrive with shrieking brakes.

"Hurry up. Damn you, get me out of here!" roared Major Span.

"Are you hurt, Major?" asked a voice.

"No, damn you, only pinned down. Get me out!" howled Major Span.

"Are you sure you can't get out? Too bad! Why didn't you notice the controls were tied? No discipline! No systematic accuracy! You made a mistake! Do you think you'll ever be any good to the Army, Major Span?"

The major struggled like a maniac to get at, or at least recognize his tormentor, but in vain. And Lieutenant Satterthwaite went away to Paris, but not in gloom this time, and there he was unmolested until his orders came for home. Except for the major's cursing there was silence for the length of time that it took men to run across the field.

It was never discovered who knocked the ambulance driver off the hood, drove the meat wagon to the scene of the crash, and then deserted it; and officially a mantle of silent charity was drawn over the entire scene.

But private guffaws over the fact that the disciple of systematic accuracy had taken off with tied controls were long and loud, and now the broken man was Major Span.

VAEA 1929

By PAUL NEUMANN

Robert Louis Stevenson
Adventurer
1850 Nascitur — Obit 1894

'TWAS here we left you to the God who made you smile;
Atop the cloud wreathed summit of your chosen bourne,
Where longest, loveliest on your lone vermilion isle
Each fleeting ray of sunset's fading beams forlorn
Falls in caress as if to pause, embracing rest
From its forced journey to the hungry beckoning west.

There from the roughly graded mountain path did part,
The while Upolu's blossoms turned from brown to flame,
Your humble pilgrim, quivering with love flooded heart,
Again to call alone upon your cherished name.
In my ears trade winds sound your requiem once more;
Sweep purple surges thundering on Apia's shore.

Good was the sweating, slipping, stumbling climb to you;
Joyful I fought to win those heights, your solitude,
And waft my eager soul far back to childhood true
To meet yours fed by angels with celestial food.
I read again with you the unblemished verse you gave
To have emblazoned on your royal wind swept grave:

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I lay me down with a will.

"This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be—
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

And, sudden as the southern coursing storm, the tears,
In blinding shower, sweep from the sky the glittering sun,
While spirit voices, murmuring deep, recall the years
When by Oahu reefs you deemed work but begun,
And, child-man, I beside you wandered on the strand,
Guiding your way, clung avid to your gentle hand.

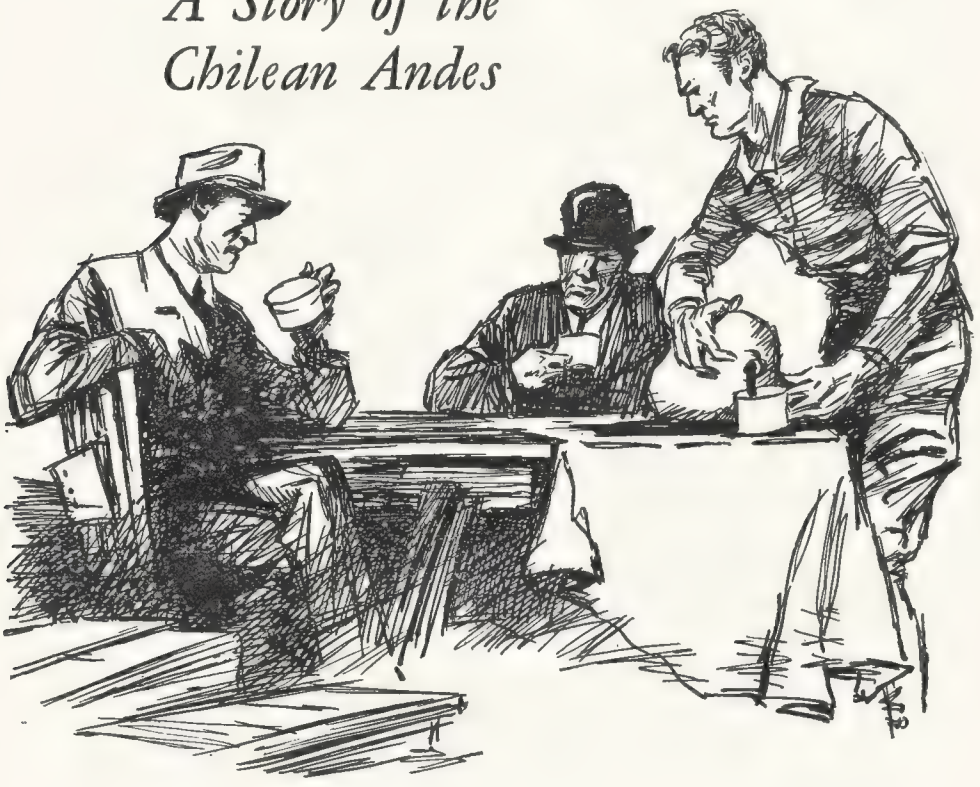
Sleep on! Your island conquest cherishes your love;
Your valleys fill with billowy vapor ghostly white,
From which Vaea lifts you to the moon above
To crown again that pallid brow with fairy light,
While combers on far rocks toward Tutuila's tide
Crash out your hymns in cadence on their wild death ride.

Ah, Nepalese and Burman, as you trudge your road
By Irawaddy to Budh Gaya's holy shrine;
Ah, Badawi, who bear on Mecca Hadj your load,
I, too, can sense your urge of soul and zeal divine.
Like you I toil in fervor to a tropic sky
And bare my understanding heart. I, too, know why.

The FUGITIVE

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

A Story of the Chilean Andes



MECHLING, looking in the piece of broken glass which served him for a mirror, combed his blond hair, parting it in the middle. All his life, till recently, he had parted it on the side. And all his life, till recently, his hair had been dark, almost black. He had treated it with a dye and encouraged the growth of sideburns on either cheek. The pointed beard, too, was new, although it had not yet sufficiently matured to make him feel safe. When it did mature he planned to evacuate this forlorm and desolate refuge, this ancient sod hut here at the Ojos of Paniri, high in the Chilean Andes.

Mechling was a fugitive, although as a fact he was innocent of that crime from whose retribution he had fled. He was wanted for the robbery of forty-five pea sized diamonds and the murder of two men. The thing had happened far to the north, in the city of San Francisco, State of California. The evidence against him was perfect, irrefutable, sworn to by an eye witness. To face trial meant to risk the scaffold. That is why Mechling, though innocent, had changed hemispheres and was coaxing his sartorial attributes into unfamiliar guise.

It was now high noon of a warm January day. Mechling took a pail and went out to the major spring, or *ojo*, of Paniri. This spring and others of its

group made a creeklet which trickled off down the red walled cañon. Clumps of pampa grass grew along this creek. Trees and bushes there were none, but the narrow valley was floored with *vega*, and on this the two burros by whose aid Mechling had brought in supplies to his refuge now grazed. Far up the valley, walling it on the Bolivian border, arose the snow capped volcanic peaks of the Cordillera.

Returning to the sod hut with the pail of water, Mechling set about the preparation of his midday meal. There was an old stove in the cabin. There were three chairs and a rude table. The shack was as Mechling had found it; his guess was that it had been built, used and long ago abandoned by some prospector or hunter of *vicuñas*. He fired the stove with *yaretta* chunks, and fried thereon the hind quarter of a *viscacha*. He then prepared some corn meal muffins and set out a cup of grape wine. The meal and the wine he had purchased at the pampas village of Chui Chui, an irrigated community on the Rio Loa, on his way up across the Atacama Desert. He had acquired two skins of wine, not because he was a wine bibber by taste, but because the wine was one of the cheaper and most nutritious foods procurable at Chui Chui.

It was while Mechling was eating dinner that the long arm of the law, reaching out from a far continent, fell heavily upon him. He was bending over the table, *viscacha* leg in one hand and wine cup in the other, when a shadow fell across his doorway and a voice bellowed—

"Hands up, Mechling!"

Surprised, in fact almost shocked out of his boots, Mechling looked up and saw Richter of the San Francisco police. A big portly fellow with a broad nose and a double chin, Mechling knew him instantly. Richter! There he stood, gun aimed at Mechling's breast, amazingly transplanted from California to Chile.

"They sent me because I knew you in the old days, Mechling," announced Richter nasally, the flabby skin of his cheeks creased in a mocking smile as he advanced into the room. "That letter you wrote your mother gave us our cue. Mitts to the roof while I frisk you."

Mechling half arose at Richter's approach, and as he did so the fugitive made a wild snatch for the automatic in his coat pocket. But the detective struck him a sharp blow across the wrist with the barrel of his own weapon, and Mechling's gun clattered to the floor.

His senses dulled by despair, Mechling raised his hands. Richter searched him for other weapons and found none. He then picked up the fallen automatic and put it in his right hip pocket. As he did so the movement brushed back the skirt of his coat and exposed the brass shield on his vest. It read: "Special Agent; International Detective Agency; San Francisco."

"Yep, I'm with a private concern now," informed Richter, as he saw the captive's eyes on his shield. "It gets me more variety than the old flatfoot racket. More travel, too, and more opporchoonity."

As the man pronounced this last word, Mechling observed what seemed to be an expression of cruel cunning gleaming from Richter's half shut eyes. Opportunity? Was there a double meaning there?

The officer now produced a pair of handcuffs and snapped them on Mechling's wrists. He then made a more thorough search of the captive's person.

"That automatic you took was the only gun I had," said Mechling huskily.

Nevertheless Richter persisted in his search. He even stooped and removed both of Mechling's boots.

"It's them handful of sparklers you snitched from Blodgett that I'm after," he explained. "The haul you made on November fourth, when you croaked both Blodgett and his valet,"

"I snitched no sparklers," protested Mechling, "nor did I croak either Blodgett or his valet."

"The warrant says you did," bantered Richter. He was seated now and prying with his knife to determine whether there was a false sole to one of the boots. "It

says you croaked two men. An extraditable charge, Mechling."

"All the same, I didn't do it," insisted Mechling, so hoarse with fright that he could only whisper.

He was trembling, white from his lips to the new grown sideburns of his temples. Innocent or not, he realized that he was caught, and caught fast. He knew the irrefutable quality of the State's evidence. Richter would take him north and Mechling flinched as his harassed mind envisioned a bleak gray tower against a bleak gray dawn, a culprit blinded by the black bandage of shame, a noose about his neck.

Richter completed his search, finding no diamonds concealed on Mechling. Mechling sat down, bathed in cold sweat. He was physically helpless, for his wrists were linked by steel.

THE PORTLY, broad nosed and somewhat squinty eyed detective from San Franciso then began his exploration of the cabin itself. In this Richter was thorough and professionally expert. He left no possible cache unexplored. Floor, ceiling and walls, the meager furnishings, the grub box and wine skins, Mechling's leather grip and extra clothing—everything received his minute inspection. He expended a full hour while Mechling sat there, handcuffed and frightened, watching him. But Richter found no trace of the forty-five pea sized diamonds alleged to have been stolen last November at a San Francisco apartment house, incident to the killings of Blodgett and his valet.

Finally Richter sat down and began a blustering, hard boiled quizzing of Mechling.

"Come clean. What did you do with them sparklers?"

"I brought them with me to Chile, but I didn't steal them," replied Mechling.

"You brought 'em up here to this shack?"

"Yes."

"Where 'bouts did you stash 'em? Don't monkey with me, Mechling. I come here for two things, you and the diamonds. I got you. Now I want the diamonds."

Richter drew his gun and with it menaced Mechling. There was a definitely cruel set to his down curved lips. Mechling flinched, wondering just how far the man would go along the lines of third degree torture.

"I hid the diamonds," Mechling announced huskily, "within ten paces of where you now sit. But I refuse to give them up; they are my honest property."

"Oh-ho!" sneered Richter. "So you refuse to give them up? And they're stashed not more than ten paces from where I sit! Listen, bo! I'll either get them sparklers or feed your bones to the condors."

Richter's gun, menacing Mechling, was in his left hand, an indication that the man was left handed. Cocking and recocking the hammer, he bullied and threatened Mechling. The captive remained stubborn, declining to elaborate his previous concessions. Somehow he got the idea that his only safety lay in withholding the gems from Richter. He thought he could read a crafty intent in the man's flabby features. Maybe Richter wanted those diamonds for himself. Once he had them, he might murder Mechling, go home and report that he had been able to find neither Mechling nor the diamonds.

Such things had happened, Mechling knew. Maybe this dick was a crook himself.

So Mechling stood stubbornly pat, and Richter could bait from him no revelation whatever.

Finally Richter left the sod hut to execute an exterior search. Mechling, handcuffed, followed to the door and watched the detective kick about for evidence of loose earth, seeking a spot where the diamonds might have been buried. A short way down the cañon there grazed a saddle mule, the mount on which Richter had ridden from Chui Chui.

Minutely Richter pursued his exploration, examining the ground and rocks for

not only ten but thirty paces on all sides of the cabin. He even climbed to the cabin roof. He found nothing.

At last he returned to confront Mechling in the doorway. He was mad now. The man's heavy face was flushed both from exertion and baffled purpose. At the doorway he towered over Mechling. The big detective outweighed his captive fifty pounds.

"Tryin' to make a monkey out o' me, huh?" Richter snarled. "Now listen! Don't come at me with no more gags like 'not ten paces from where I sit'. Where at are them sparklers?"

"Find them," challenged Mechling.

Richter went berserk. His fist clenched and he swung it heavily to Mechling's chin. Mechling was knocked ten feet back into the cabin. He tripped over a chair and sprawled on the floor. Richter followed, uttering a volley of vicious, mordant threats as to what he would do next. He jerked Mechling to his feet and slammed him into a chair. He then sat down knee to knee with his captive and loosed a flood of verbal intimidation.

"Look here, bo. You know what'll happen to you before a Frisco jury, don't you?"

"They'll likely convict me," admitted Mechling dispiritedly. The steel on his wrists tinkled as, raising his locked hands, he rubbed the bruise on his chin.

"They'll hang you," predicted Richter.

"Very likely. That's why I hiked it for the tall uncut," admitted Mechling. He then added stubbornly, "But I'm innocent."

"That's what they all claim," sneered Richter. "But your case is open and shut. They was a eye witness that you croaked Blodgett and his valet, Jost, and snitched them diamonds. Not only that, but you got a record, Mechling."

"Yes," agreed Mechling huskily, his half bearded chin drooping. "I served one year for a break I made when I was twenty-two. I'm forty now. I've lived straight for eighteen years. I saved twenty-five thousand at honest work. I invested that money in diamonds. They think I stole 'em and killed two men. But I didn't. Before God, Richter, I swear I'm innocent. I—"

RICHTER cut short the now almost hysterical defense of Mechling.

"Naturally you claim you're lily pure," he sneered. "They always do. When you got to Chile you wrote a letter to your mother sayin' you was innocent. It didn't say where you were, but the letter was postmarked at a nitrate *oficina* on the pampas below Chui Chui. The job had been turned over to our agency, who intercepted the letter. I took the first boat and here I am, Mechling. And now you got the gall to tell me you didn't croak Blodgett."

"It's the truth," insisted Mechling, "and I'll tell you how it happened. I wanted to invest my twenty-five thousand in diamonds, because some one had told me diamonds were a safe investment, and due for a rise. I dickered with Blodgett, whom I knew to be a square shooter, and who'd collected a bag of forty-five big diamonds. His price was twenty-seven thousand for the lot. I only had twenty-five thousand and that's what I offered.

"But on the night of November fourth something happened which put him in need of some quick cash. He phoned me from his apartment at midnight, saying I could have the diamonds for the price I'd offered if I'd bring the cash over right away. I knew Blodgett was honest, so I went to his apartment with the money. It was on the first floor of a walk-up. His neighbor across the hall saw him admit me. Inside his living room, I gave him the cash and took the diamonds. It was a square deal, no tricks on either side.

"I pouched the diamonds. He was putting the money in a table drawer. Just then the bedroom door opened and there stood his valet, Jost, with a gun, holding us up. Jost demanded both the money and the stones. As far as I was concerned he could have had them. I was not even armed. I'm no scrapper,

Richter, so I didn't tie into Jost. But Blodgett did. There was a gun in the drawer where he was stowing the money. He snatched it. He and Jost shot it out, and both were killed. I ran. Being unarmed, it was my cue to run for the cops and I did.

"I dodged out into the hall. It was a rear first floor apartment and the alley door, closer to me than the street, was open. The alley was a short cut to Market Street, too. I jumped out into the alley and ran fast. It was dark, after midnight. Somebody had left the cap off a manhole in that alley. I stumbled into it and fell ten feet. I hit brick and was stunned on the floor of a storm sewer. I don't know how long it was before a wash of water revived me, but when it did I found I couldn't climb out of that particular manhole. I followed the sewer three blocks to its exit in a ravine. My head was throbbing and I started home.

"As I approached my house I saw a patrol wagon parked at the curb. There were two cops on the porch ringing the bell. I realized that I had a pocketful o' diamonds. I'd lain in a sewer so at the best I looked like I'd been in a fight. I decided my best bet would be to walk voluntarily to police headquarters and tell my story, rather than to be yanked there by force. So I turned around and went the other way.

"Three blocks from the police station, just as dawn was breaking, I met a paper boy on his morning route. I bought a paper. My own name jumped from the headlines and scared me stiff. I read the story. Both Blodgett and his valet, Jost, were dead. But Jost had lived for ten minutes after the arrival of the police. That sucker Jost made me a fugitive for life, Richter. He swore I'd stuck up both him and his boss and stole forty-five diamonds, and in doing so had shot them both.

"The paper went on to say that Jost had been a trusted servant of Blodgett's for ten years, and was above suspicion. That wasn't all. The neighbor across the hall not only saw me enter the apartment but he saw me run out, after the shots, and jump into the alley. He described me to a T. Then there was the fact that I'd served a short rap eighteen years before. So you see what sort of a chance I had, Richter."

"The same chance as a snowball in hell," responded Richter.

"So I beat it. I had nothing but a clear conscience and forty-five diamonds, and with these I hiked for the tall uncut, eventually landing in Chile. I still got the diamonds and the clear conscience. But I worried about my poor old mother, bless her soul! I knew she was eating her heart out up in Frisco, so I wrote her, swearing I was innocent. She'll believe me, though no one else will."

"You are right no one else will," said Richter. "But how did you get the ice by the Anto custom house?"

"That was the only crime I committed," conceded Mechling. "I didn't mind paying duty, but I couldn't afford to let the diamonds be found on me. So I made them into a phoney package before coming ashore at Antofagasta. The customs man opened my grip and handled that package, but it fooled him. He thought it was something else, and I got by. I then figured that if the package would fool the customs, it would fool anybody else. So I have never yet unbound the package. I've left it intact. I was wise, Richter, because it's fooled you, too. For two hours you've been searching this shack, my person, the walls, floor, ceiling, roof, furniture and what not, and scratching the ground outside for ten paces in all directions. During that search you've *actually touched the package of diamonds, and pushed it aside.*"

"What!" cried Richter, his eyes starting from his head. "You've got the gall to string me with guff like that?"

"I'm telling you the truth," insisted Mechling.

Richter again succumbed to temper and struck Mechling on the chin with his clenched fist. Wrist bound, Mechling toppled over on the floor, chair and all. Then Richter began a frenzied research

of the environs. Again he sifted the shack's furnishings, piece by piece. He invaded the grub box, the suit case. He explored the ground without. He again climbed to the roof. When he came in he was sore, ugly. But instead of threatening Mechling, he tried another tack.

"Listen, bo," he said, speaking now from the corner of a twisted mouth, "maybe you and me can make a dicker. If I take you north they'll hang you. But suppose I turn you loose? Suppose I go home and claim I couldn't find you at all? For that little favor would you give me the diamonds?"

IT HAD come, the proposal of bribe. Mechling had been expecting it for the last hour. The crooked proposition fit well with the detective's character as Mechling read it. He recalled Richter's use of the word "opportunity". By that he had meant opportunity for graft. Obviously Richter's game was to catch a fugitive, then offer him freedom for the loot.

"Come clean with the ice and I'll turn you loose," repeated Richter craftily.

There was now a distinct glow of avarice in his eyes. But there was something else there, too, thought Mechling. Lurking in their depths was even a deeper and darker guile than any yet expressed in words. Mechling felt a cold shiver creep up the small of his back. He could well guess what would happen to him if he delivered the diamonds to Richter.

"Richter, just as you say, trial means conviction in my case," Mechling answered finally. "And a man is justified in paying any price for his life. Therefore I accept your dirty bribe, providing we can figure a way whereby I can be sure of getting what I buy."

"Of getting what you buy?" barked Richter.

"I mean my freedom. How can I trust you? You've just acknowledged you're willing to doublecross your employers. If you'd do that, you wouldn't hesitate to doublecross me, a friendless fugitive."

"How would I doublecross you?" snapped Richter. But his eyes for the first time evaded Mechling's.

"You could do it two ways. Suppose I tell you the particular spot less than ten paces from here where the package of diamonds is concealed. You immediately verify my revelation and take possession of the diamonds. One way you could doublecross me would be to yank me north to court, denying that you'd offered me a bribe. But I think you'd take the other way to doublecross me. It would be safer for you. That way you'd get the diamonds and be in no danger of my squealing."

"What's that?" asked Richter, blinking nervously.

"That way would be to shoot me dead in cold blood, right where I sit, bury me, and then claim you'd found neither me nor the diamonds."

The purple flush of guilt which flooded the face of Richter was indication enough to Mechling that this foul program had indeed been in the man's mind.

Richter, of course, denied it. He argued. He swore he would play fair. If Mechling would give him the diamonds he would unlock the cuffs and go his way.

"I wouldn't believe you on a stack of Bibles," said Mechling. "To save my life I'm willing to accept your dirty proposition; but it's up to you to figure some way the trade can be made—the diamonds for my freedom—so as to guarantee me against a doublecross."

Richter could naturally see the captive's viewpoint. He was willing to discuss it, and did so at length. Such a guarantee, however, seemed impossible of fulfillment or enforcement, and neither man could suggest a scheme satisfactory to the other; and thus they were deadlocked.

Richter, even though he could not thereafter doublecross his captive as he would have preferred, was nevertheless willing and eager to take the diamonds and go his way. Mechling, in turn, was willing to buy his freedom with the diamonds. It was Mechling who finally broke the stalemate by suggesting a referee.

"A referee?" echoed Richter in genuine astonishment.

"I mean a witness. Let the trade be made in front of a third party. You would not risk shooting me in cold blood in front of a witness."

"Witness!" exclaimed Richter, looking suspiciously at Mechling and then nervously over his shoulder. "You mean to say there's somebody else besides us in these Godforsaken hills?"

"I'm alone at this camp," informed Mechling. "But over in the next cañon, three miles north, there's an Englishman. He's a little runt of a cockney; by his lingo and manner I'd say he belongs to the Limehouse underworld. My guess is that he's a fugitive, just like me. I know nothing about him, however, except that he comes over to my spring every other day, just at sundown, to get a keg of water. He's due today, in about two hours."

This information worried Richter. After pondering it he snarled: "I see your game. You been stallin' me all afternoon, figurin' this pal o' yourn'll show up and toss a gun on me!"

"Not a bit of it," denied Mechling. "If that was true, why should I give you two hours' notice? Why wouldn't I keep stalling and let this fellow slip up on you? I know nothing about him except that he's camping in a dry cañon three miles from water. That looks like he wants to keep off travel routes, so I guess him to be a fugitive. By all appearances he's a low lifed Limehouse cockney. First few trips he made over here he was suspicious of me. Finally he guessed I'm a fugitive myself, so he warmed up a little. He's an insignificant rat; weighs about a hundred pounds; told me his name is Raymie Atkins. Last two times he was over here I invited him into the shack and gave him a cup of wine."

"Does he pack a gat?" barked Richter.

"He does. And I imagine he wouldn't be slow in taking a shot at any one who tried to pinch him. But you don't want to pinch him. He's a London crook and you're a Frisco dick. You don't even know, or care, what he's wanted for. If you make no hostile move toward him, he'll make no hostile move toward you. He wants to leave alone and be let alone. Point is that he's the solution to our stalemate. He'll be our witness unconsciously. We won't tell him what we're doing. When he shows up for his keg of water, he'll remember the cup of wine I gave him twice before and come in to mooch another. Don't let him see that brass shield under your coat. Keep an eye on him, but do not ask him any personal questions. You can rest assured he'll keep an eye on you. I'll invite you both to have a snort of wine. I'll—"

"I see," sneered Richter. "You'll dope my drink and put me to sleep."

"NO SUCH thing. Don't forget, Richter, that I'm just as anxious to give you the diamonds and get rid of you as you are to get them and be gone. I won't dope your wine. I won't even fill your cup. You notice that all my cups are tin. I'll fill the cockney's cup with wine, but not yours. While I'm back at the corner of the room getting the wine, you two being seated here at the table, I'll write a few lines on the back of a card. Those lines will tell explicitly where the diamonds are. I'll drop the card in your tin cup. I'll serve the two cups, one to you with the card in it, one to the Englishman with wine in it. As he drinks, you pretend to drink, but actually you merely read the card in the bottom of your cup."

"Then what?" asked Richter.

"You pretend to drain your cup, wipe your lips, and say you'll have to be moving on. Then, by moving less than ten paces, you casually retrieve the package, verifying the fact that it actually contains the diamonds, if you wish. It won't hurt if the cockney sees you pick up the package. He'll think it's something else, just like the customs man did, just like you did yourself when you handled it this afternoon. Having made sure that you've got the diamonds, you climb your mule and ride."

"A hell of a lot of red tape," objected Richter. "It's all a scheme to hold me here till the Limehouser shows up so you can squeal I'm a dick and start him gunning me."

"Why should I start a gunfight when I'm the only unarmed man in the room? You got your gun on one hip and mine on the other," reminded Mechling. "Besides, if this cockney knew anything about the diamonds, he'd be as dangerous to me as you are. He's tough. He'd croak me for the diamonds if he knew I had them. Think it over. My only stake is freedom, my life. I'd give you the stones right now if I trusted you. Take it or leave it, Richter."

They argued, but ultimately Richter gave in. He was finally convinced that there was absolutely no other way to break the stalemate. Moreover, there was a ring of sincerity in Mechling's voice. It was quite obvious that Mechling had no other motive than to hold a bribe seeking law officer true to his word. Moreover the scheme was both simple and logical.

So they sat there, these two, waiting for a third to referee their deal. Richter removed Mechling's handcuffs and Mechling put on his boots. It would not do to let the cockney see the handcuffs, for that would immediately indicate Richter's status as a man hunter.

Released, but not armed, Mechling busied himself clearing the table of its effects. Richter, who was hungry, took occasion to eat a few mouthfuls from the remains of the noon meal.

"Which will make it technically the truth," mentioned Mechling, "when I tell our expected guest that you're a pilgrim who stopped for a bite to eat and are immediately going on to Chui Chui."

Outside the sun was low, sinking lower as its level rays struck the Andean snow to the east. And still they waited, these two, the dishonest man hunter and the honest fugitive, for the coming of a third, Raymie Atkins. Richter was nervous and alert. Mechling was also nervous, frightened on his own account. He twisted the strands of his half grown Van Dyke with one hand, and with the other he rubbed broodingly at his blondined hair which was parted in the middle.

He knew he was between the devil and the sea. To evade Richter, he was deliberately introducing another villain of a stripe possibly even more dangerous than Richter. Should he set them one against the other? For two reasons he vetoed the temptation. One reason was that in the mêlée he might be killed himself. The other reason was that Mechling was essentially a man of honest motives. He was playing square with Richter. Every word he had spoken was the truth. His conscience was clear and he wanted it to stay that way. Whereas if he set Atkins on Richter, and Atkins should shoot Richter, he, Mechling, would be an accessory to the crime.

"Got a card and pencil?" Richter asked.

Mechling produced an old card from his pocket. He laid it and a pencil conveniently near the wine skin, in the darkest corner of the room. He then placed three empty tin cups nearby. The stage was set.

A half hour before sundown they heard Atkins coming. Richter was seated at the table. Mechling looked out and saw a diminutive, trampishly dressed man prodding a burro loaded with a water keg, down a crevice on the north slope of the cañon.

"Here he comes," Mechling announced.

"I'll watch that guy like a hawk," snarled Richter. "Mechling, if you squeal I'm a dick, I'll kill you both, and you first."

The cockney, Raymie Atkins, left his burro at the major *ojo* of Paniri and came shambling toward the sod hut. No doubt he recalled the liquid refreshment he had received from Mechling, and his desert parched palate was yearning for more. He came shambling across the *vega*, a furtive, rat faced runt, wearing clothes much two large for him and a greasy cap. One side of his baggy coat sagged lower than the other, suggesting a

weight in the pocket. He came to the cabin door and, peering in cautiously, saw that Mechling had a guest.

"Howdy, Atkins," greeted Mechling. "Step in and have a cup of Chui Chui wine."

The cockney, the yellowish skin of his cheeks twitching with half hostile apprehension, stood stiffly in the doorway appraising Richter. His right hand was hooked rigidly near the sagging pocket of his coat.

Mechling went to him and said reassuringly:

"Come on in. Nobody's gonna hurt you."

"Who's 'at big bloke at th' table?" Atkins whispered hoarsely.

"Guy who stopped in for a bite to eat. He's leavin' right away for Chui Chui."

FOR A moment Atkins hesitated, his eyes never leaving Richter. Just as alertly Richter was watching him. At last Atkins entered, stepping with a shifty, sidewise gait and always facing Richter. Mechling placed a chair for him across the table from Richter. Atkins sidled to it and sat down.

"And now a free round of drinks on the house," announced Mechling, forcing a levity which he did not feel. "Be sociable, gentlemen, while I fill 'em up."

The host went back to that darker corner of the room where three tin cups, a card and a pencil lay near a skin of wine. His back to the table, he filled one cup with wine and then began writing swiftly on the blank face of the card.

Richter and Atkins squinted at each other across the table, waiting for Mechling to serve the wine. Richter was not much alarmed now, for he was well armed and confident in his prowess with a gun. In physique he would have made two of the jaundiced little cockney.

Atkins was seated sidewise in his chair, the seat pushed fully a foot farther back from the table than normal, his eyes fixed upon the bosom of Richter's coat, as though trying to penetrate its fabric and see if there was star or shield on the vest beneath. No observer could have doubted that Atkins was tough, as tough as if he were a Paris Apache and a Tombstone faro banker rolled into one hard-boiled ball.

And then came Mechling, the American fugitive, with two cups. One, filled with mild native wine, he handed to Atkins. The other, containing nothing but a card he passed to Richter. Mechling then withdrew to the wine skin to pour a cup for himself.

At the table, the English fugitive Atkins raised his cup to to lips, and sipped. But over the rim of the cup he watched Richter as closely as before. The portly Richter likewise put the cup to his lips and pretended to sip, although his cup was empty of wine. To make the bluff effective he removed the cup and wiped his mouth with a sleeve.

Then, holding the cup about eight inches in front of his chin, the natural attitude of a drinker between swallows, he read the message on the card, exposed quite plainly on the tin bottom of the cup. The message he read so amazed him that for a few seconds he forgot Atkins. The message of the card was:

> To fool the customs I took the stuffings out of nine .45 cartridges. In each there was just room for five diamonds. I replaced the lead balls in the ends so they would still look like bullets. Eight went into the butt clip of my automatic and one in the chamber. They're still there. They've been in your hip pocket for four hours. If you think I'm lying, look and see.

Look and see! How instinctive, how inevitably natural the next muscular reflex of Richter's right arm. Dumbfounded, only half credulous of the revelation, and yet avariciously eager to put it to the test, the simple and obvious test of looking to see, Richter's right hand swung back to his right hip pocket, brushing back the skirt of his coat, whipping out a .45 automatic Army gun which was alleged to be loaded with forty-five pea sized diamonds.

Yet if such action on Richter's part was natural, how far more natural was that

of Atkins? Atkins was wide awake and he saw what he saw. He glimpsed the suddenly exposed shield on the big man's vest. He saw the gun drawn. How was Atkins to know that it was inspired by no motive of menace? Whatever its purpose, it was plainly a draw. It only beat that of Raymie Atkins by a split second. Atkins drew and shot Richter with fatal precision between the eyes. The shot roared and filled the sod hut with smoke. Richter collapsed on the table, stone dead.

Mechling leaped forward, horrified. He had schemed for no such tragedy as this. In fact, he had not schemed at all.

"Why did you do it?" he cried to Atkins.

"You blime nut!" wheezed the cockney. "Wot the 'ell else could Hi do? Cripes, 'e flashed 'is bloomin' badge on me and pulled 'is gun. Wot else could Hi do?"

Waiting for no response, Raymie Atkins dashed from the cabin on the next lap of his perennial flight from crime. Mechling quickly picked up the automatic which had fallen from Richter's hand and followed to the door. From there he saw the cockney leap to the back of the saddled mule which had been Richter's transport from Chui Chui. Off went Atkins at a gallop, up the cañon, heading for some new and unknown retreat in the Andean wilderness.

Mechling remained in his doorway, surveying the field, unchallenged master of those things which were his own and his all—a clear conscience and forty-five pea sized diamonds.

The TERROR of the SEAS

By F. ST. MARS

DARKNESS lay on the face of the waters still, although far away down in the east it was quite bright. At some considerable distance an unseen ship was still showing her lights, which twinkled and glimmered steadily. From time to time a black form "like some great uncouth bat", a cormorant in point of fact, flapped heavily seaward over the mighty heaves that represented calm on the ocean in that place. From half a mile away or so, where the cliffs reared sheer a stupendous black rampart to the seas, came loud thunderings as the breakers broke in spume and lost themselves among the giant caves. Those were the only sounds upon the face of the waters.

Then, in an instant, the black, glassy surface of the sea broke in a glimmer of spray as there uprose, as it were, a column of marble, a great tapering, torpedo shaped body of ghostly white, perhaps twenty, or it may have been twenty-four feet long. For a moment it hung there, poised, with the water falling from it all around, ere, with a soulless, hungry sigh, it curved, and in one superb plunge, vanished from sight. It was a grampus,

or "killer", or officially, the terrible *Orca Gladiator*—wolf of the seas.

There followed a pause of perhaps five minutes, and then, going at extraordinary speed, a form, glistening and wet, like that of some big fish—it was a porpoise really—shot literally from the surface into the air, curved, hit the water again, and vanished. Close behind it, seething with the terrific speed at which it cut the waves, a high, jet black, vertical fin shot along the surface and vanished also.

Again the porpoise broke into sight, darted along the surface with one last flurry, and leaped for its life as a huge shining head with devilish little eyes, no visible ears, and only a longish oval patch of spotless flashing white behind its eyes to relieve its ebon hues, shot up beneath it with enormous mouth agape.

There was one appalling clash as the great jaws shut, a spurt of blood, the mighty, odd shaped blunt head turned over, the high back fin cut a little white frill of foam upon the dark waves for a second or two, and—nothing. Both beasts—for they were animals, or more strictly, mammals, with hot blood in their veins and breathing through their noses, for all their fishy appearance—had vanished utterly. One of them, the porpoise, had vanished forever from this world, for at a single snap the black monster of the deep had eaten him alive.

IN A MINUTE the grampus was up again, undulating with a wonderful long, switchback motion along the surface, and then it was seen that he was not all black, but only black above waterline. Below waterline was white, with that wonderful whiteness which only creatures of the sea know.

He was heading inshore, toward the towering cliffs, and in a very few minutes, as he swerved and began to work his way along the foot of them, one began to guess why. His purpose was a bad one, as the purpose of the dread killer always is.

After much cutting through the water at top speed, the back fin stopped, and the great blunt head of its owner came up, with its gleaming white throat, its white patches behind the eyes and, as the swell lifted him, those little wicked eyes got a clear view of what was ahead.

He beheld a big, amphitheater-like inlet among the cliffs, several wet slabs of rock lifted above the swell, shining in the new light, and upon them, lazily dozing, were perhaps a dozen common seals. Another seal was in the water, apparently sound asleep, while yet another, which was also in the water, played with a bunch of seaweed like a kitten.

In the center of the picture was a great whiskered beast, straight on end, with his enormous puffed nozzle pointing to heaven, bobbing like a bottle. Beside the common seals he was a giant. Beside the killer he was not nearly a giant.

In one swift glance the killer took in the scene, marked his prey, the great gray seal, gave his peculiar sidelong roll, and dived.

Through the foggy green depths, still as if petrified, lighted only by a circle of dazzling gold white above, the terrible killer hurled his mighty bulk along in the form of a gigantic luminous bubble, a wonderful, shapeless thing, silent as death itself.

He reached the location under his prey, his great rounded muzzle showed for a moment above the surface, and then, as he rolled over and darted down, his big flipper flashed—"finning", they call this—in the sun. He had missed. The great gray seal was not there. Ahead, leading straight down to the black mouth of a mighty cavern in the cliffs, a train of silver bubbles ran, and they were the track of his prey, warned, apparently, in some inexplicable way, of his presence. He could follow him there if he liked, but he did not like. No pounding about by breakers in spiky sea grottoes for him. He was too big for that, and had seen too many stranded or jammed, or left by the tide.

Without a fraction of a second's pause he swerved, and with amazing speed dashed to the mouth of the inlet, shooting

straight across it. How can I describe how that poor hunted seal dodged, how flashed, how turned, how darted, only in the end to be remorselessly overtaken and engulfed in one awful chop of the great jaws. Then there was—well, only the half of a seal, sinking to the bottom. A second chop, and there was no seal at all.

After that the wolf of the seas headed steadily out to the offing, till, when about a quarter of a mile out, he was joined, first by one, then other killers, rising mysteriously from nowhere, and falling in his wake, spouting and blowing little jets of vapor into the cold air, as their great leader carried on.

There were eight killers in that "herd", as they call it; some about thirteen, some fifteen, one twenty, and the great old leader, over twenty feet long. Apparently, they had sent their leader in to "beat" prey away from the rocks for them.

The "pack"—that is a better term than "herd"—now traveled swiftly, and fairly straight, either undulating through and over the waves, more or less on view, or else just below the surface, when only their high, shark-like back fins showed. Occasionally the whole pack would "sound" and go down. And when it did so, it scattered, and there invariably followed a great commotion and silvery flashing and darting of fish. Each killer then chased what it could on its own for a minute or two, snapping up great cod, flounder, and halibut, many pounds in weight, as if they were but a mouthful—which they were—but invariably returning to the surface again, to fall each into its allotted place in the line of the pack, and continue the steady, swift northward journey.

About two hours later they came upon four seals—"fall outs" from a big herd, traveling—swimming together. The seals went straight away, often getting along over the surface like a thrown pebble playing what we call "ducks and drakes", and at really amazing speed; and twice they dived to an enormous depth, but they had not such thick oily blubber to withstand the great cold and greater pressure as the relentlessly pursuing killers had, and were forced to come up. In the end, therefore, they scattered, as their last chance, and two of them, leaping high again and again like pursued fish in desperation, were swum down and torn to pieces by the ravenous wolves of the sea.

Towards afternoon the air began gradually to get colder and colder. It had not been anything within reach of warm, anyway, but now it began to get cruel—there is no other word for it—and nobody seemed to feel surprise when there opened up, towering and glistening white, tremendous, and indescribably mysterious—an iceberg.

The old leader of the killers, directly the cold in air and water warned him, had altered course towards it, and now he was taking a hungry view of the wonder from the top of every swell he crested. It was indeed a big iceberg.

A NEARER inspection and a careful scout round the sides of the dazzling walls—oh, that bitter water and that knifelike blast!—revealed to him the fact that the berg was inhabited by three polar bears and a dozen or two gulls. It had evidently but lately broken away from pack ice off a land promontory, and would soon strand off another, no doubt, and some of the pack ice lay floating close by, and upon that pack ice were twenty and one seals.

At least, there were twenty and one seals when the old killer and his gang—represented solely by high, pointed back fins—first appeared out of the depths. One of the bears, however, essayed a beautiful stalk upon the seals of the pack ice, and swimming across, mostly under water, captured one neatly. He was returning to the berg with his prize, when things went wrong, and events began to happen somehow.

The surviving seals suddenly trailed past him in mad panic, going like the wind, all but four, who wisely pulled out on to the ice at once, and the bear, after

one look below the surface, swam for that iceberg as he had seldom swum before.

He reached the iceberg all right, moving at a great rate—with the peculiar round nose of the old killer a dozen yards behind his apology for a tail. Also he began to scramble up—*was* scrambling up, in fact, and had, to all intents and purposes, got beyond possible argument, when the gleaming nose of the killer shot up and, heaving the great body on end, with a ponderous spring he grabbed the bear by one hind leg.

Now, polar bears do not admit suzerainty where they live, and this bear was a big one. Also, the polar bear is about the biggest proposition in the claw and tooth line of all the bears.

There followed an awful roaring, rending inferno, as the bear, fighting, as only a polar bear can, every inch of the way, came down slowly, sliding in a small avalanche of ice and snow and a fog of spray. What he might have done single-handed against the grampus is nothing but guesswork—a big chunk out of the latter's blubber, and two red hot gridiron claw scrapes, seemed to suggest that he would not have died easily—but it did not matter, anyway.

There was a gleaming flash of white, a snap, an awful growling howl; another of equally gleaming black, another snap, another more awful growling howl. That represented two more killers, rising on end to help their leader. Then all vanished together in one fearful, churned-up frothing. Later, one after the other, the killers began to come to the surface, gulping chunks of polar bear, and diving again—"lob tailing" they call it—for more.

An hour later, the ominous pirate back fin of the big killer rose too and cut along the surface far from the iceberg—alone. He was traveling very fast, and with suggestive purposefulness. Behind him a pink streak dyed the jade green waves occasionally. The gaps in his great cheeks, which the dying bear's fangs had torn, although nothing to worry about to such a beast as he, were bleeding somewhat, and there had been a tendency on the part of the next largest grampus of the herd—a twenty-foot male—to lead the others to turn upon him.

They would not have chanced it themselves—at least, not with one so strong and so slightly injured. But, excited with blood lust, as they were at the moment, the rival for leadership of the herd, and incidentally the possession of the pick of the killer "flappers"—*might* have induced the rest to back his attack. Wherefore, the old grampus, descending suddenly like a stone to an enormous depth, had given them the slip in the pitlike blackness, and was heading now northwestwards alone, hoping probably that they were not following the blood trail, and keeping up a high speed till that same blood trail should cease.

Naturally, he was not in the best of tempers and, of course, he was hungry. Never, indeed, have I known him when he was not hungry, and rarely in a sweet mood.

For one, or both, of these reasons, perhaps, he turned from his course half a point to investigate a small sailing ship that lay, all sails set, careering gaily away between him and the setting sun.

The grampus was just about to "breach" when something happened which made him "round"—roll to go down—with a suddenness that set the water hissing behind.

The whining song of a bullet passing close above his head, and the smacking clap of a rifle report from the sailing vessel, came almost together.

Now once, long ago, the old killer had been wounded by a rifle bullet, and he had never forgotten the *bang* and the excruciating pain that accompanied that noise. He spun like a top, therefore, and hurtled away headlong, only to charge all but full tilt into something.

It seemed as though an island, or half the sea bed, or some little trifle of that kind, had chosen that moment to rise, very suddenly and very swiftly, right smack under his round nose. It was not so much a mass, it was a mountain,

dark bluish gray, shining, and *alive*.

The killer, going astern and porting his helm hard, so to speak, watched it come up, foot after foot, yard after yard, ten feet after ten feet. One twelve foot monster that was only a flipper of the miracle came up and over, sending him scuttling out of its way, as it struck the water with a crash that might have scattered his brains.

THE MIGHTY Greenland whale, giant of the frozen Arctic, the killer had seen, and the monster sperm, or cachalot, the biggest thing that grows out of the huge Pacific, he had set eyes on, but neither of those, though they dwarfed all else known, showed tremendous after the fashion of this stupendous leviathan. It was not a whale at all, it was a super-whale.

As a matter of fact, though, it rejoiced in the style and title, full and official, of Sibbald's whale (*Baloenoptera sibbaldi*), the "sulphur-bottom" of the whalers. This conveys nothing of what the old grampus saw rising monstrously above the lapping swell there before him, except that, whoever Mr. Sibbald may have been, his discovery must have given him a wondrous fright, and made him wonder if his brain was going. In point of truth, that old grampus beheld, lying there along green, lapping water, casting a far reaching and terrible shadow in the light of the setting sun, eighty-six and a half feet of whale, living and alive—eighty-six and one half English feet.

The miracle had been following that ship for twenty-one days. Goodness knows what for. Perhaps to capsize her, which would have been bad, and has been done by smaller, though great, whales before. Perhaps to make love to her, which would have been a good deal worse. I know not; nor did the captain and crew of the ship.

They did not get nervous, you understand. They only longed ardently for the absence of that living volcano. They even fired at it with a rifle—as the old killer knew, nearly to his cost—had fired at it repeatedly, but to no purpose. As well shoot a hippopotamus with an air-gun, and very much more safely.

And it was at that awkward and precise moment that the "herd" or "school" or "pack", or whatever you please to call it, of the killers, led by the rival twenty footer, hot on the trail of our wicked old friend, chose to turn up.

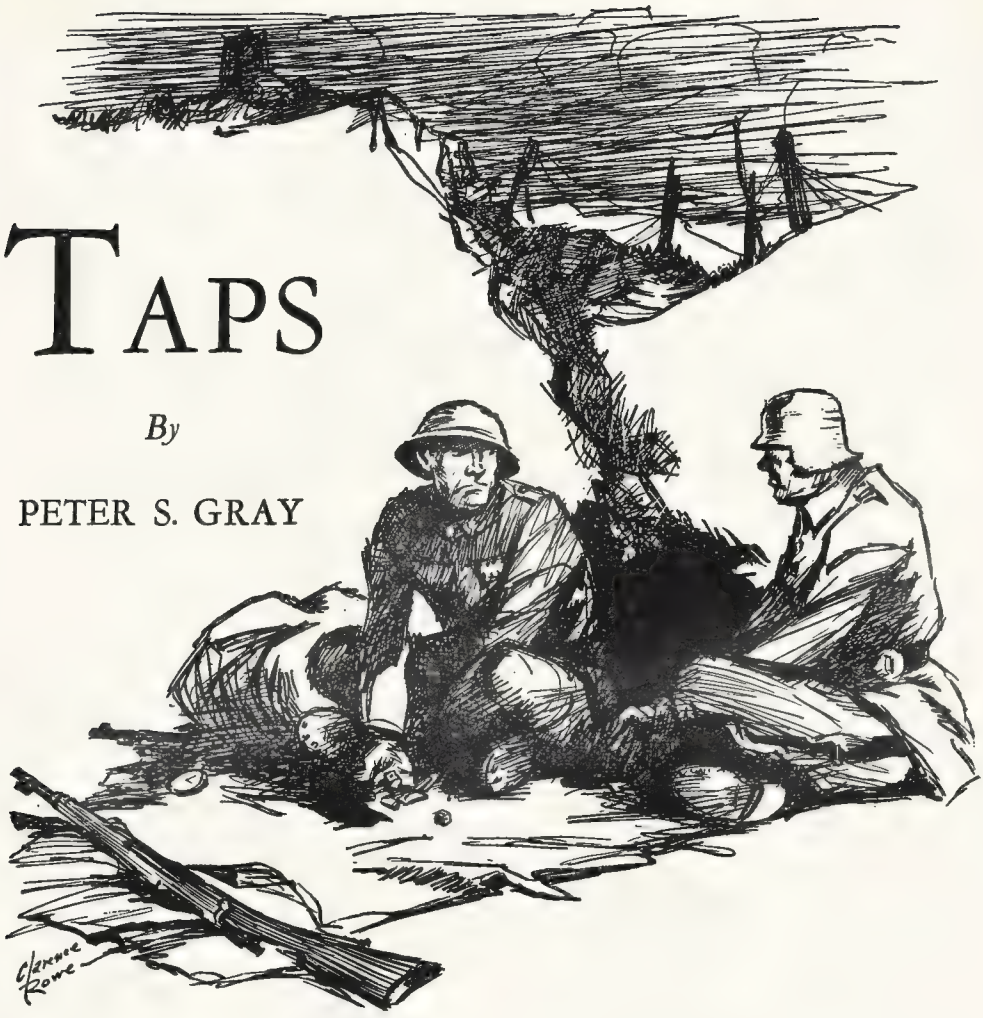
The old leader had no delusions. He turned, "rounded", and went straight at the white and gleaming belly—but it looked green and neutral under water—of his foe, and that foe, that rival, taken a little by surprise at the fury of his headlong rush, was forced to "breach".

It was a pretty shot, and—killers are not beloved, even by sailormen. The mountain named after Mr. Sibbald had made the owner of the rifle a laughing-stock, and he was only too glad to do some good with a bullet or two. The little projectile, going at something over a thousand feet per second—that is to say, just ahead of the sound of the report that went with it—hit the long gleaming column of the leaping grampus fair on the side with a nasty, thick, perfectly audible *thtt*.

Then that killer heeled over, and went down in a cloud of spray, just as the biggest of all the whales began to "round" and "spout" a vapory column as high as the masts. And the old killer went down with his rival—down, past green fog, and cod; past twilight, and cuttlefish, past pale night, and nameless shadows; to blank, black night, nameless cold, and gray white slime.

And when the old killer eventually appeared once more upon the sea's surface he was alone. Gory he was, and fearful to look upon, but he was alone, and fearless.

The mighty whale had sunk, the herd of killers were scattered, and there was nothing in the seas or under the seas to prevent the old reprobate of a killer from eloping shoreward with the brightest hued and most shapely of all the "flapper" killers, which he did.



TAPS

By

PETER S. GRAY

The Story of a Man Who Dared Shoot Craps With the Devil

THEY met after midnight, when the inactivity of the long dark hours before dawn makes close friends of chance acquaintances. Their own wounds and the groans of a pain crazed newcomer in the ward had kept both Deacon Gage and Dan Steele from sleeping. At opposite ends of the dim ether tainted room they waited until the nurse finished her somewhat perfunctory rounds and disappeared. Then, wrapping themselves in bedclothes, they made their separate ways to the balcony outside and met like two stray ghosts.

"Hi, what you doing out here, soldier?" Steele asked in a whisper.

"Same thing as yourself, Major, getting

some cool night air in place of that stinking hospital air inside. Damn! You can still hear that fellow screamin'."

Deck chairs offered cool relief to their bedridden bodies. Before them high trees of the hospital yard rustled gently in the darkness. When matches were touched to cigarets Gage saw a lean humorous mouth, shrewd gray eyes and straight brows under a turban of bandages. By the same light Steele saw a blunt featured face with an expression of intense seriousness that long ago had invited the nickname of Deacon.

"I'm no major," said Steele. "I'm a buck private like I guess you are and I don't want to be called an officer even in fun."

"Sure, I was only kidding. Anyway, it's more important what you are on the outside than what you happen to be in this man's Army. I'm a first class bricklayer."

"Well, when I enlisted I told them I was a bookkeeper, but I don't see why I shouldn't tell you straight. On the outside I'm a grifter."

"A grifter—what's that?"

"You've seen a man around a circus getting you to bet which shell he put a pea under. He's a grifter. And the fellow that works in a gambling house is another grifter. So's a man that makes his living shooting crap. I've played some exciting little games in my day."

"Hmm. I bet you have. And I'm carrying this crutch because of a little crap game myself."

"Somebody get sore and knife you?"

"No, it's more complicated than that. It's quite a story."

"Let's hear it. The night's too good to go back and try to sleep."

"All right, I'll see if I can. Maybe I'll stop lying awake thinking about it if I told somebody.

"We were up above Nancy in a *bon* sector. Nothing much to do but pick lice, build up earthworks and do guard duty. Occasionally we'd pull a night raid just to let the Heinies know we were around. The first raid I was on up there was just a little affair, one platoon out to storm an easy part of a trench and bring back a few prisoners. The Intelligence Department wanted to third degree some Heinies and find out when the war'd be over, I guess.

"Just the right amount of moon for a raid. And the looey, a new one, led us out as if we were all going straight to Berlin. The night before a nice clean path had been cut in the spider web, and we had easy going until some haymaker tripped on a strand of wire at the side somewhere. It twanged like a mile long piano string. He fell on his face and pulled the trigger of his rifle that he was carrying ready cocked.

"Then hell popped. We hit the dirt and lay there while hummingbirds, whizbangs, porridge pots, and everything the Heinies had, opened up on us. We just had to lie there and take it like a lot of potatoes getting rained on. Only not so much like that either.

"The shavetail kept us playing 'possum long after the Heinies gave up and decided they had fixed us so we wouldn't twang any more wire or shoot rifles again. I heard the sergeant cussing to himself, calling the looey a pretty list of names and promising to scalp the this and that cub bear that tripped. That sergeant is one terrible disaster when warmed up.

"When we started on again we didn't march like we were headed for Berlin this time. We sneaked through our wire like a lot of little kids cutting through a cemetery at night. And we edged around shell holes like they were open graves full of spooks. About half way to the other lines the looey sees some.

" 'At 'em,' he screams. 'Deploy right and left.'

"Bang into a Heinie raiding party. And a big one, too. They were lying there ready for us. No need for orders. It was a free-for-all. Between cracks of my rifle I hear funny grunts in the darkness in front, and the looey screaming like mad.

"I was reaching for another rifle clip when *wowie*—it must have been a potato masher. And I go out cold."

"You don't call that a crap game, do you?" Steele interrupted.

"Don't get impatient. I'm coming to that. The crap game was next day.

"Before daylight I came to with my head and left shoulder feeling like a couple of pincushions. What with the darkness that hadn't quite lifted and a thick fog, I couldn't see a foot away. I was still hanging on to my rifle and I slip in the clip like I was going to when I was knocked out cold."

"Where were you?" asked Steele impatiently. His tone suggested that he could tell the same story much more effectively himself.

"I'm coming to that. I was in a shell hole as big as the inside of a box car. Right where I had fallen when I was hit. But I didn't know it then. It was almost dark and I was goofy with a couple of nasty gashes, I'm telling you.

"When I slipped in that clip I hear a little click about ten feet away like the cocking of an automatic. No other sound but that. And I aim my rifle in that direction and keep my finger on the trigger. You know how a cat will freeze on a mouse hole, trying to see two or three turns down the passage, her body bent for a leap and nothing moving but the tip of her tail. That's the way I waited trying to see through the fog, only I didn't wave nothing, not even my ears. I didn't look to right nor left nor up nor down, only straight ahead where I'd heard the little click like an automatic being cocked.

"It's a wonder the other guy and I didn't bore a tunnel through the fog with our trying to stare through it so hard. It was one of those black stormy mornings when daytime doesn't see why it shouldn't keep right on being night. And a sharp, cold, little wind kept mussing up the fog. Funny the tricks your eyes will play on you at a time like that. Once I thought I saw some washing flapping on a line over there. And once I thought I saw a long white angel rise up and flap her wings. But I didn't watch her go to heaven."

"You could have said 'Hello, who's there?'," remarked Steele, "like I did when I met you hobbling out here."

"Only I wasn't feeling chatty. And how did I know but what a cheery good morning wouldn't be answered by some hot lead? As a matter of fact, I think it would have been.

"THE SUN, 'way off somewhere, was acting like a sleepy soldier that didn't see why he should get up when reveille's sounded. But all of a sudden I can see through the fog, can see a dark figure sitting on the other side, staring at me.

" 'Mustn't look scared. Mustn't look scared,' I tell myself. And all the time the shape gets clearer and clearer. The wind blows a rift in the fog and I see the face.

"Hot damn! It was a face to make babies holler, a face to make respectable citizens go home and lock their doors. If I had been ten years younger I'd have yelled, 'Bogey man, ma, bogey man!' And I'd have run. I want you to know what that face looked like. There was nothing the matter with it except that it would have made a swell Hallowe'en mask. The eyes under the coal scuttle Heinie helmet were like some I'd seen in a zoo somewhere. A smashed nose, smashed three ways. And a crooked red mouth set on sideways under a straight Kaiser Bill mustache.

" 'Hello, Yank,' he says, with his crosswise mouth. 'I've got you covered.'

"As good English as that, and sort of careless-like.

" 'Mornin', Fritz,' I drawls careless-like too. 'I've had you covered for the last half hour.'

"And then the fog lifts and I see he's a captain. But what takes my eye most is a big Luger pointing at my solar plexus. A hole in his pants at the knee is all bloody, and his blouse is open, showing another bloody smear. I sure would hate to wake up every morning to see something like him. His face doesn't change its Hallowe'en look at all, but it's clear he's thinking fast.

"Out of the corner of my eye I see we aren't alone in that shell hole. Two others are lying there, but they don't move, and I was right in thinking them stiffs. I sit tight watching Funnyface, waiting for him to make the first move, and hoping he does it quick, for my left arm and shoulder hurt like sin and are getting too weak to hang on to my rifle steady.

" 'I see no reason why I should shoot you,' he says slowly, 'and a number of reasons why I shouldn't. Your last act would be to pull that trigger, and I am already sufficiently wounded. Besides I have killed too many soldiers—Americans, English, French, Belgians and some Germans. I find no pleasure in it.'

" 'Germans,' I says, 'what for?'

" 'Insubordination before the enemy, generally,' he says. 'But there are other reasons why I will not shoot you. It is now too light to venture from this hole. We would be sniped by your men or my men who are equally distant from here. Besides, neither of us are now in physical condition to attempt the trip back to our own lines. So I propose that for the day we forget that we are enemies, forget even the difference in rank, take care of our wounds and other needs, enjoy each other's company, and in the evening we will make our ways back to the lines from which we came.'

"When he said that about even forgetting the difference in rank I want to go over and smash his lousy face for him. But his plan suits me all right and I tell him so. He lays his Luger down in the middle of the shell hole and I put my rifle on top of it, and look around for the first time.

"The looey of our platoon is lying there all mussed up, with a Heinie trench knife sticking in his stomach. And a young Fritz, not much more than a boy, is sprawled out alongside. They are both covered thick with dew.

"I climb up and peek over the edge of the shell hole and see three Heinies and three of my platoon lying there stiff. I can't see our lines nor the German lines, only shell holes and wire and dead tree stumps and plowed up earth. And I feel like I'm marooned in the middle of the ocean on a raft alone with Captain Kidd. I keep my head low 'cause I know snipers could see me easy enough even if I can't see much.

"Then Funnyface and I fix up each other's wounds. My head is all right except for a big clout where something grazed my helmet, but my shoulder is all swollen up in nasty shape. Funnyface cleans the trench knife on his pants, digs some metal out of my shoulder and plasters me up with bandages out of his own first aid kit. And I mend him as well as I can. His chest is only bruised from falling down in the hole, but his knee is a bloody mess and he thinks he can't never use that leg again.

"I HAD left my pack in the trench when I first started out; didn't even have a canteen with me. But the young Heinie had a canteen of beer, a half loaf of that pumpernickel they carry that's made out of cork and mahogany sawdust, besides some hefty cheese and a can of sardines. Why he should have been carrying a kitchen cupboard like that along, I don't know. We help ourselves to that besides a flask of cognac and some chocolate we find on the looey, and have a regular sergeant major's breakfast with something to spare for the rest of the day.

"His face doesn't improve none on close inspection, but I get sort of used to it. He has a smooth way of talking, and asks me where I come from, what's my name and all that, which I tell him. But when he wants to know how we run our outposts and how experienced we are and such things, I string him along as pretty as you please. I tell him we are double strength, that we have hot chow four times a day with whisky, that we are all old veterans and fought bushmen in the tropics last year.

"And he tells me where he traveled be-

fore the war, most everywhere you can think of, sometimes on technical business and sometimes in the show business. I don't ask him what he did in the show business, since I'm sure he was the dog faced boy, and don't want to embarrass him. He knew some American cities better than I do—Chicago, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York—"

"Did he tell you his name?" Steele asked.

" 'I am the Herr Captain Gustav Otto Pricken,' he told me. Why, do you think you knew him at some time?"

"No, I never knew any showman by that name. But where does the crap game come in?"

"Well I went through the looey's pockets for the things to be sent back to his family, and was going to make a bundle of everything but some French photographs that his mother hadn't better see. Then I look at his wrist watch and wonder should I take that off and put it with the other things. It's a slick watch, platinum, I guess.

" 'That watch is needed more at the Front than in the lieutenant's home,' the Herr Captain suggests. 'Why don't you keep it? Or better, let's roll dice for it. That would be amusing.' And he brings galloping dominoes from his pocket and rattles them.

"That finishes me. The only reason I'm not a family man today is because I like rolling bones better than rocking babies, or most anything else. I used to say that I'd roll 'em with the devil for my everlasting soul.

"So we go to it, shooting on the dead Heinie's coat that we spread on the ground. Funnyface loses the first throw. And I win on a natural. It's a nice little watch, and he doesn't mind as he has a watch of his own.

"Then we want something else to roll for. Funnyface's money wouldn't do me any good, and he doesn't want francs. But we frisk the young Heinie and find a little tobacco box inlaid slick with silver, and a staghorn knife, and another watch in a separate case with a heavy gold chain.

"Luck is with me. The dice come up my way almost every time. Usually I win on a natural.

"Another dead Jerry is lying up above very near the edge of the shell hole. And I pull him down to see what he can contribute to our little party. He's got schnapps and beer and bread for the supply dump, besides another watch, a trick pocket periscope, and a pair of Iron Cross cuff links to roll for. And I win them.

"The Herr Captain talks to those dice like he knows them well.

" 'Sugar cubes,' he says, 'be sweet to me.'

"He's a strange sight, sitting there very stiff, clicking the bones and talking to them like a dinge. When he loses he just smiles a crosswise smile and says nothing.

"He puts his own wrist watch down to roll for. He loses that, too.

" 'This is a gentleman's game, Private Gage,' he says. 'And you play like a man of honor and win like a gentleman. I am glad we did not shoot each other.'

"The sun gets higher and we go on shooting crap. My four watches agree that it's somewhere around noon, then one o'clock and two, and we go on playing. The big guns back of our lines open up a little barrage and the Jerries answer back, but the captain and me out in the middle of No Man's Land don't bother about the war none. We stop playing only once when two Limey planes chase a Heinie over to his lines and out of sight.

"That old Funnyface sure is a game guy. Makes me ashamed, a little, the way I keep on winning. I'm tellin' you, I turned up six naturals in a row once. I put up all the things I've won and get 'em right back. Pretty soon about everything in sight is piled around me, except the firearms in the middle of the shell hole.

"He eyes the rifle and the Luger and rubs his chin.

" 'Private Gage,' he says, 'you might as well win my automatic too. That's all

that is left. Besides, I find it impossible to walk, my knee is so badly shot. I can not leave here alone. Let us roll for our weapons. If you win, take me back to your lines tonight as a prisoner. You might be given a medal or promotion for bringing in one of your enemy's captains, even a wounded one. The fact that you are wounded would add to your glory.' He looks at me pitiful-like.

"'And if you win, what then?' I asks him.

" 'WHY THEN, sir, you escort me to the German lines, and I shall help you to escape. But you can not lose. Never have I seen such luck. And what is more, you win like a gentleman.'

"I'd shoot crap with the devil, is what I used to say, for my everlastin' soul. And when I look him over I think I've come as near to rolling with the old boy out of hell, as I ever will.

" 'Come,' he says. 'Do you agree? I think it is my roll.'

"I've got a rabbit foot that I haven't touched till then. But now I bring it out and lay it in front of me, which makes him laugh.

" 'This isn't no everyday rabbit foot,' I tells him. 'Liza carried it across the ice. Columbus brought it to America. The Pope blessed it and Mother Shipton made a rabbit stew with it, big enough for ten families. When it fell off Brooklyn Bridge, Steve Brodie jumped after it.'

"He laughs again, lookin' more and more like the dog faced boy. He spreads out the coat smooth and warms up the dice a long time, talking soft to them in German like he was praying. He rattles 'em so long in his fist I think he has changed his mind about rollin' after all.

"At last he rolls 'em, plum in the middle of the coat. And they sit up showin' seven like a couple of little poodles doin' tricks. Ahh! He lets out a puff of air and grabs the cognac bottle. Me, I whistle 'Seeing Nellie Home.' The Luger goes back in his holster, and the bolt of my rifle he heaves as far as he can.

" 'Captain,' I says, as he starts to put the dice back in his pocket, 'let's roll once more before we close up the bank for the day. I like those African golf balls of yours, an' I'll put up anything I've got to fade them. I want those dice for souvenirs,' I tell him.

"He blazes up and asks do I think they're crooked dice. It's clear they are straight and I tells him so. And he cools down and lets me fade them with the rabbit foot. I win them with Big Dick which always was a lucky point with me."

"Still got those dice?" Steele asked.

"Right here in my nightshirt pocket along with my wallet. I don't trust those orderlies with my kit bag. Well, when I win them there's nothing more to play for and I'm weak and all in. So I have some more mahogany bread and cheese and schnapps, and pound my ear.

"When I wake up it's dark and cold, and Funnyface is snoring. And my feet are tied together with a cord and he's got ahold of the other end, which makes me burning mad. I get loose without waking him and for a moment think of cutting back to my outfit and leave him where he is. But, jees, I always pay my gambling debts, making no exceptions.

"He grabs for his Luger when I wake him, and snarls at me. Then he sees who I am, pats me on the back and calls me his good friend. I bawl him out for tying up my feet, and ask him how in hell do I know but what a guy that would do that wouldn't take me prisoner after I saw him safe to his lines, or doublecross me some other way. He apologizes by saying that he's not seen a man of honor or a gentleman for such a long time that he's forgotten how to treat one. And to show that everything is all right he says I can carry the Luger, but he don't hand it to me and I don't take it. He's a square guy even if he has a funny face and did tie my feet, which I tells him, but not mentioning his face though.

"A brighter moon than the night before is going to make traveling simpler and at the same time more risky. *Beau-*

coup flares are going up on both sides, and other fireworks are coming down. It's one of the poppingest evenings I've seen in that sector. And somehow I'd have been quite willin' to stay right there in the shell hole for the rest of the night.

"Goin' up the side of the shell hole with the captain is a lot more elaborate than falling into it alone. He uses my rifle for a cane and leans heavy on my lame shoulder. His bad leg is just so much dead weight, keeping him at a ninety year old pace. As we get to the top of the hole a big flare sorta drifts toward us, and I want to duck but can't drop him. We must have showed up to the surrounding countryside like a couple of Eiffel Towers.

"We've barely started on our way when he grabs me by the neck, drops the rifle and jams the Luger in my ribs.

" 'Not that way, damn it! You can't pull that on me,' he says. 'You've got to take me to the German lines.'

" 'That's what we're headed for, you son of a so and so,' I tell him.

"THEN neither of us are sure which direction is France and which Germany. He thought he knew the way by watching one of the big guns he recognized as a Jerry. And I had thought all day the lines were the other way round. Besides, the flare that had come toward us from the other direction was an American flare. Neither of us had paid any attention to the sun during the day; wasn't much to pay attention to. And I suppose we could have told by the moon, but we were both too rattled to think of that.

"Finally I convince him that he's wrong, and he's willing to start toward where I think Germany is. We'll find out soon enough anyhow.

"We start on again, he pressing hard into my wounded shoulder and grunting every time he moves his bad leg. A big rat or a rabbit jumps up in front of us and we clutch each other like two old ladies at a picnic. We laugh at that and he pats me on the shoulder and says that I shall have a good escort back to my lines.

" 'If not tonight, then tomorrow night,' he tells me.

"I don't want to cross No Man's Land again that night any too well, but if I don't, what will I tell the sergeant about being away so long, I wonder. And we hobble on, neither of us being sure we're going in the right direction.

"*Rumph!* There's a funny noise from a shell hole in front of us like somebody's clearing his throat or a pig's getting ready to grunt.

" 'Halt. Who's there?' is growled at us. It's the sergeant himself.

" 'Don't shoot, Sarge. It's me, Private Gage,' I tell him quick.

" 'Who's with you?' he wants to know.

" 'Huh? What's that, Sarge,' I stalls.

" 'Who is with you, you damned sap?' he inquires again.

" 'Oh, I got a prisoner with me.' And with that I grabs Funnyface's Luger and sticks it in his back. 'Sorry, old-timer,' I whispers to him, 'but it looks like I gotta do it.'

"He grabs me by the neck, starts to choke me. I kick him off and he falls. And I tell him to shut up or I'll shoot him.

"Sarge comes up with a squad of men, sees we're both wounded and turns Funnyface over to a corporal and another fellow. And I show him where the looey is lying in the shell hole. It seems that that shavetail was the son of a Senator or a Governor or some guy like that, and headquarters has ordered a funeral with flowers and salutes back of the lines.

"They put him on a stretcher and we start back to our trenches, the way Funnyface and I had been headed.

" 'You framed me,' he barks at me.

"And then he calls me all the names he knows in both English and German. I felt sorry for him, but he should have seen that I did the only thing I could.

"That dirty old front line looked like home and mother and I was willing to stay there the rest of my life, but after I turned over the looey's things to the sergeant and told him a cock-and-bull story about how I captured my prisoner

he sees how washed out I am and rushes me back to a dressing station and then to an ambulance.

"AND WHO do you think's put in the ambulance alongside me? Yep, old Funnyface, strapped to a stretcher. The intelligent department has finished with him and he's on his way to a prison camp. 'Underhanded black scoundrel' is the kindest thing he calls me. And there is no telling him I did as well as I could to live up to my side of the bargain.

"Well, I go to a swell hospital near Paris, that had better chow than this one and prettier nurses. And I keep worrying about old Funnyface and wishin' I could have got him back to his lines safe."

Deacon Gage lighted another cigaret and puffed reflectively. The ward behind them was silent except for an occasional low moan. In the trees, dimly silhouetted by a faint suggestion of early sun, a night bird chirruped.

"Did you ever hear about him again?" Steele asked.

"That's the part of the whole shootin' match that bothers me most. And it was a shootin' match, I want to tell you.

"When my shoulder is almost as good as new I go A. W. O. Loose one evening and meet a guy named Hansen from my home town. He's a sergeant of a guard outfit over a German prison camp detailed for special work. So I ask him does he know a dog faced captain that I've captured by the name of Pricken. And he does know him and wishes I hadn't captured him, 'cause he's a son of a son at trying to escape and the meanest prisoner they've got.

"I buy Hansen *beaucoup* wine and he gets into a weepin' jag about the dear old home town and his dear old mother and the dear old school house and the dear old swimmin' hole. It's hard getting him off the subject of the dear old pool hall, but I find out enough about how the guard is run so I could run it myself.

"The guards are an easy goin', hard boiled lot, all wounded badly enough so they're not able to do duty at the Front any more. The prisoners are doing road work beyond the next village, and they sleep and eat in shacks fenced in with bobbed wire. I see that wire later and it would make a good chicken coop. Two fences inside the other, slanting at the top. And the wire is heavy and close together. It would take a high flyin' bird to get out of that cage. Funnyface never tried to get out of there. He's made his dashes when they're doing work on the road or somewhere.

"I help Hansen with his high school yell a couple of times and then climbs back over the hospital wall. But I don't do much sleeping that night. I lay awake wonderin' how I can crack the jug for Funnyface. It'll be aidin' and abettin' the enemy, but I got to do it, got to put him on the underground railway somehow.

"I sneak out again next day and finds where the prisoners are doing road work. And I spot old Funnyface right off. He's limping up and down with a cane watching the other Heinies shovel gravel. When he sees me he spits, and I know he wishes he had a Luger instead of just his face to shoot with.

"Hansen's not in sight, and one of the guards tells me he's sleepin' off a jag. I talk a while with this guard who is a nice kid. And once when Funnyface limps near us I say as loud as I can that I'm wanting to get evacuated from the hospital back to my outfit so I can pay a certain guy a gambling debt.

"Funnyface catches on and don't spit no more. And when nobody's lookin' he winks at me and gives me one of his crosswise grins. He's just as ornery looking as ever, and since I've got to aid and abet the enemy I sure wishes I had a better looking specimen and one I liked a little better.

"I hang around till they go back to the coop, and I go along. The prisoners are locked up with a sentry outside, and I trail along with the guards to the guardhouse.

"Hansen is there looking as glum as

yesterday's chow. He don't more than say hello to me before he lights into the whole gang and give them hell about two sets of keys that are lost. There's three sets, one for the sentry, another for the corporal of the guard, and one set for Hansen himself.

"And there aren't any of these keys in sight, and how the deuce does he know but what some prisoner cleanin' up the guard house has swiped them and will unlock the two gates and let all the Heinies out some night?

"He cusses 'em until one dopey lookin' guy pulls a set out of his pocket and gets bawled out for it. Then somebody suggests that Hansen's set is in his desk. Which they are. And then they fall out for chow and another bawlin' out.

"It's hard getting Hansen to have a drink. But I tell him he's looking bad and needs a little first class wine, and that I've got *beaucoup francs* from shootin' crap in the hospital to buy it with. He gives in and we go to a café for some more wine and high school yells. He gets pifflicated quicker than anybody I ever saw.

"An' I've got to help him back to the guard house, which I'm willing to do since it gives me a chance to go through his pockets and lift his keys. And that's almost too easy, as simple as picking an apple from a push cart.

"When we come to the coop I look it over again.

"Two great big arc lights make it as bright as Coney Island. Though the shadows of the shacks inside are dark enough to hide in pretty well, and it's dark outside the lights a little ways. The sentry walks around the outside fence slowly, and when he's on the other side from the gates it's plain he can't see anybody going in, because of the shacks that are in the way.

"An old witch of a nurse next morning tells me that if I'm well enough to go A. W. O. Loose so often then I'm well enough to be shanghaied back to my outfit.

"So I see I've got to work fast.

"I FIND the same guards watching the Heinies shovel gravel, and I chin with them again. One fellow points out Funnyface and tells me how he's tried to beat it away and how they shoot over his head to scare him and stop him. I say I'd like to look at his funny mug close. So they call him over and I give him a cigaret and kid him about the war. And with the cigaret I slip him a little piece of paper that he puts in his pocket quick.

"On the paper I'd written:

> "Shave your whiskers and be ready at one o'clock tonight near the gate of the coop. Leave the rest to me.

"He winks and pulls his whiskers at me before I leave.

"Talk about your perfect crime and your smooth runnin' underground railway! At one o'clock I was waiting in some bushes outside the range of the big arc lights with everything planned as slick as any master criminal mind could ask for. Hid in a wash room nearby was a uniform about Funnyface's size that I'd lifted at the hospital. Then down the road a little ways was a truck with supplies for the Front, waiting for a shell shocked buddy of mine that had got into trouble. I'd picked a game truck driver, told him a sob story and promised him a couple of hundred francs for the night's work.

"The dopey guy was the sentry on duty. He not only thinks slow, he moves slow. He leans on his rifle and stands in front of the gate, chewing tobacco. Then he moves a little farther on and rests again. He doesn't look inside the fence nor up my way, just keeps starin' at his feet which are pigeon toed and still quite a curiosity to him, I guess.

"Finally he waddles to the other side out of sight. In the darkness of the shed nearest the inner gate I see a figure move, and I know it's Funnyface.

"Even then I don't want to do it. It's like standin' on a high springboard and not wanting to jump, but knowing you got to. I hate like the devil to go to the

first gate in all that bright light. But I grab the keys tight, take a deep breath, and dashes down.

"I find the right key and open the gate with only a little creak. Funnyface's waitin' inside the next gate. It opens with a shriek like a scared hen. And me, I feel like ten chicken thieves.

"He grabs my hands.

" 'Leggo, gotta close these gates,' I whisper. More creaks.

"Funnyface hobbles like a ninety year old. I try to pull him. We're almost out of the bright lights, almost safe, when—*crack-crack-crack*—the sentry's opened up on us. Funnyface grunts, grabs his chest, and crumbles. Two more rifle cracks and I get one in the leg like a lotta hot soup.

" 'There's nothing to do but drop him and run.

" 'Corporal of the guard. Post No. 1,' dopey screams.

"More shots, more voices. The whole bloomin' camp's after me. 'Serves me damn' well right,' I keeps saying to myself. And I run hell bent for election.

"The truck driver's waiting. He's heard the shots and sees my bloody leg.

" 'O. K., kid, we're off,' he says and pulls me on the seat beside him. The engine's already going and we slide out like we're racing a locomotive.

"I'd sure like to meet that truck driver again. He didn't ask no questions, drove hard all night holdin' me from falling out sometimes. And in the morning he leaves me at this hospital after telling them I'm a shell shock case that got in a shooting match with some M. P.'s down the road a mile."

DEACON GAGE sat back in his chair and stared straight before him at the world the early dawn revealed. The sky through the trees had faded to a steel gray. Smoke rose from a red tiled roof and lost itself in the thin gray air.

"We'd better turn in again," he said.

He felt disappointed. He had hoped somehow that telling the story would straighten out the whole affair for him, perhaps justify himself in his own eyes. Now he wished it had not been told.

Steele made no move to go. Gage fumbled in his pocket for a cigaret. The last one was gone. He brought out the dice he had won from the Captain, and rattled them in his clenched fist.

"What do you think?" he asked. "Was I a blamed fool for trying to spring him from the jug?"

"I dunno about that. You sure gave him a good break. Those the bones?"

Gage nodded, handed them to Steele and yawned. He was suddenly dead tired. His leg burned as fiercely as when he was first shot.

"Wished you felt like a little game now, old-timer," said Steele. He slipped to the floor and idly played with the dice, mumbling occasionally at their caprices. "You won six naturals in a row, did you say? Humm. Remember whether they were mostly sevens or mostly elevens?"

"All of 'em were sevens, six of them. Every hear of such a run?"

"Humm. Maybe we could do it again. Here's one seven, I think. Yup, a seven. And here. Come seven. What did I tell you? You poor sap. Three sevens. And here's four sevens. And here—yup, here's five sevens. Glitterin' horseshoes and solid gold bricks. Six sevens. And here's a seventh or I'm a mother of twins. The hand is quicker than the glass eye. Say, my boy, you'd better stick to a five centime limit till I give you a few lessons with these tap dice. They're the best pair I ever used."

"Tap dice? What do you mean?" Gage had fallen from his chair and was kneeling on the floor like a convert in the throes of conversion.

"These are tap dice, you hick. Slidin' buckshot inside. Tap 'em like this and you shoot sevens as easy as calling telephone numbers. Tap 'em like this and they're fair dice. Jees, how that Jerry captain trimmed you, giving you a run of luck first and then appealin' to your softer nature. Say, look here, did he have a face like this?" Fingers pulling at the

corners of his mouth he made a grotesque grimace.

Gage nodded, his own mouth agape.

"And was he a little taller than me? Were his hands long with skinny fingers? His hair and eyes dark, his skin sallow?"

Gage choked and nodded.

"Boil me alive. Thinka that. Humm. Baron Gauner was the name he used in the carnival business. And I usta tell him he'd get shot from using tap dice once too often."

The HOTTENTOTS *by* DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT

III. LANGUAGE AND MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

THE early travelers in South Africa imagined from the appearance and general development of the Hottentots that their state was one of utter savagery. Added to this misconception was another, to the effect that a language so full of "clicking" and guttural sounds was one little removed from the domain of animal cries. It came, therefore, as a great surprise to the first man able to analyse the language scientifically, to find that it is one of the most perfect tongues in the world.

It has great precision and supreme regularity; it is so constructed that ambiguity is unknown. Either the language is used correctly or it is a jumble of nonsense, and so simple are the rules of its grammar that it is no exaggeration to say that a man of ordinary intelligence can master them in a week at most. The pronunciation is certainly a matter of great difficulty to the beginner, and it can not be taught by any correspondence course, but, once mastered, there is nothing further to be feared.

A prominent feature in all the Khoikhoi idioms is the strict monosyllabism of the root, which ends in a vowel. There are three well-defined tones—in some dialects, four—called middle, high and low, which vary the meaning of the homophones. All masculine nouns end in B; all feminine nouns in S; and all common nouns in I. The languages have a dual as well as a plural, and possess a decimal system of counting, far antedating their contact with any outside civilization.

The pronouns are simple, yet comprehensive, and they have simplified forms which can be suffixed to verbs. *Tita* is "I," and *Tita ma* is "I give"; but the suffix form is *ta*, so the same idea can be expressed by *ma-ta*. The verb is the simple root and does not change for mood, tense or person. The indicative is the simple root, the imperfect puts *go* between the pronoun and the verb, while the future uses *ni*.

From these simple forms others can be developed to meet all the needs of translation from other tongues. There are no prepositions, as such words follow the main words and are thus postpositions. There are numerous adverbs and conjunctions, but the nature of the language demands simplicity of construction rather than complicated prolixity.

Naturally enough, while the Hottentot was little understood, it was assumed that he had borrowed his language, in all its perfection and simplicity, from a superior race. As Hottentot traditions began to be taken down from the lips of natives, however, it was seen that the innate intelligence of the race was far higher than had been suspected hitherto, and that the "despised Hottentot" was intellectually far ahead of his black brother, the Bantu.

A Story of the Coal Miners

By W. RYERSON JOHNSON

SOME BATTERED BUT SAFE

ED NICHOLSON, night shift laborer in the Morning Glory coal mine, gobbed the last few fragments of fallen slate and top coal that lay on the track at his feet and straightened up, resting on his shovel. One by one the others of the clean-up gang parked their shovels and rested too.

"Da niggerhead, Ed—" a big Polish miner pointed to a huge boulder half imbedded in the slate roof above them—"one day she fall. Maybe one hundred year, no fall; maybe tonight, fall. Nobody know. Slip quick lak anyt'ing, never mak no noise—hit 'em in head, kill 'em. We better to take she down, you no t'ink?"

"Yes, I think so, Pete, but the boss says leave it alone. We trimmed too much off the top already, he said."

A few lights appeared suddenly out of the darkness at the head of the silent entry. They approached, bobbing yellow blobs on black satin. The sound of merry, laughing voices, startlingly out of place in these far interior workings, was carried to the miners in the chain gang.

"Wat th' hell . . ."

"Da boss . . ."

"Handsome Hardy throwin' another mine party, huh?"

Shovels scraped on the leveled slack of the roadway as the miners commenced a mock show of activity. Only Ed Nicholson, young, tall, strong, continued to rest on his shovel.

"What's the idea?" He threw out the question a little sharply.

"Da boss, you no see, Ed? He come . . ."

"Who th' hell cares? We've done all there is to do in here, haven't we? We haven't been loafing, have we? Hardy hasn't got any kick coming, has he? Let him come; who cares?"

Emulating Nicholson, the men rested on their shovels. The men were used to following the lead of this serious minded, fair playing lad. It was general information that Ed had passed the State mine manager's examination. They were daily expecting him to be plucked from their number and put in a position of authority over them. It was where he belonged, they felt.

When something had opened up on the night shift, however, the company had brought in Leslie Hardy—Handsome Hardy, the men had promptly nicknamed him—from one of their other mines to take the job of straw boss. That had been two, three months ago, and Ed was still pushing a bango in the clean-up gang. Handsome Hardy's own gang.

The new straw boss was in turn patronizing and overbearing in his attitude toward Ed. He assigned him more than his share of the unpleasant jobs. Another man might have requested a transfer. But a stubborn streak in Ed's nature kept him plugging doggedly where he was.

A boss's job was not the only thing Hardy had taken. He had taken Ed's girl, too. Ed was keenly aware of that just now as a sprinkling of familiar girlish laughter blended with Handsome Hardy's confident tenor and floated to him from the light slashed darkness ahead.

"Bad top in here. Handsome hadn't ought to bring any women in this entry," some one voiced the guarded opinion.

That was what Ed was thinking, and his eyes smoldered and the knuckles of his hand which gripped the shovel handle were white. He could not speak out because he realized that anything he might say would seem motivated by jealousy. It was common talk in the town that the new boss had walked off with Ed's girl.

Ed and Dorothy had gone together since they were kids, had graduated from high school together. Dorothy started teaching in the local grade school then, and Ed started on his career with the town's single industry, the Morning Glory coal mine. Everybody had expected them to be married some day.

Then Handsome Hardy had avalanched in. He was the tall, dark kind. Women raved about his eyes, his teeth, his smile, his hair. He could have had most any girl in town, and he had chosen Dorothy.

Sometimes Ed, catching the straw boss's mocking eyes on him and intercepting an equally mocking thin lipped smile, wondered whether Hardy had not fastened his attentions upon Dorothy purposely to anger him.

ED'S HAND slipped from his shovel. He flexed and unflexed his fingers tensely. He had had enough from Hardy, he decided suddenly. If Hardy tried to show him up tonight before Dorothy, they would have to call out the rescue team. He would show them his fists were quicker than Hardy's wit. They were almost there now. He could already recognize most of them, men and girls, from behind their flickering carbide lights.

"Hello, Ed."

How well he knew that voice.

"Hello, Dorothy."

His answer was casual, showing nothing of the surge of emotion he felt.

"Hi there, Ed."

"Hello, Doc; you on this party too? Dorothy—" he spoke crisply—"don't

come any closer, you and Marie. Everybody—stay where you are."

"Oh, aren't you glad to see us, though?" She laughed shortly.

There was something about her laugh these days that puzzled Ed. With serene disregard for his orders she came forward.

"Dorothy, don't." Handsome Hardy caught her by the arm. "Ed's right. There's been a big fall here. It's dangerous."

Cheeks flaming, blue eyes flashing rebellion, she nevertheless checked her approach.

Ed writhed inwardly at the readiness with which she obeyed Hardy when she would not listen to him. But he had no time to brood over it. Handsome Hardy had stepped forward and was starting his grandstand play.

"What do you fellows think this is—a public rest room? Why aren't you working?"

The men looked to Ed to answer.

"We just this minute finished our job in here." Ed's voice was dangerously calm.

"Well, what's the idea of every one leaning around on the shovels? You tired? I'll have bunks put in here for you—"

"What do you suggest, Hardy—we start scooping up air or digging a hole in the floor or something? You heard me—I said we'd just finished up this job. You don't want any of the top pulled down, you say. All right, there's nothing else to be done here."

"Then why don't you find something else to do? You're not babies. Does the boss have to tell you everything? If some of you would show a little initiative once in a while maybe you'd get somewhere in this man's coal mine." His glance rested insolently upon Ed.

"Initiative, huh?" Ed smiled grimly and started slipping out of his heavy work jacket. "Hardy, you're going to see so much initiative in the next couple minutes you won't be able to open your eyes to any more of it for a week."

The straw boss started back in alarm as Ed approached him with set jaw, narrowed eyes and clenched fists.

Things can happen quickly in a coal mine. The huge niggerhead boulder which might have remained imbedded in the slate of the roof for a hundred years, or a day, chose this instant to fall. Ed, by his belligerent attitude, unwittingly saved the straw boss from outright death.

Handsome Hardy had been standing directly beneath the niggerhead. The rock fell as he stepped quickly backward before Ed's advance. He did not entirely escape the niggerhead. It struck him a glancing blow on the head and he dropped limply to lie as still and lifeless as the inanimate black rock itself.

For a split instant nothing moved, nothing sounded.

Then a fragment of slate dropped from the roof and shattered itself in three pieces against the niggerhead. The pieces slid off the smooth surface of the boulder to the floor. A girl screamed. More small pieces of slate dropped from the roof and an ominous crackling noise rippled through the mass of slate over their heads.

"Get back," Ed bellowed hoarsely, spreading his arms wide.

While they stumbled backward, Ed hurled himself forward. The terrifying crackling sound emanating from the roof above increased in volume. Ed plunged through a shower of falling slate fragments, gathered up the unconscious body of the straw boss and started dragging him clear.

The doctor, who had quickly herded the members of the mine party to a place of comparative safety, rushed forward to help Ed.

He arrived not a second too soon. The crackling reached its peak in violence and with a sudden rushing roar the entry fell in, piling up black slate and gray rock ton on ton.

Ed and the doctor, staggering under their lifeless burden, were swallowed from the view of the others by the clouds of black dust which swirled up at their very feet.

But they emerged from the enveloping

curtain, Ed with a trickle of blood on his cheek where a sharp piece of slate had struck.

"Ed, Ed, you're all right?" It was Dorothy's frantic voice, Dorothy clutching his shirt. "You—you're wonderful—what you did . . . Is he—hurt bad?"

Ed noticed her face was very white. Poor kid, he thought, it was tough on her. She was trying to show him how grateful she was.

"I don't know, Dorothy. We'll see."

ED SQUATTED beside the doctor who was already making an examination of the straw boss's injuries.

"Lefty Greb's streakin' for the parting, Doc. Be back in a minute with a first aid kit."

The doctor nodded.

"Lucky you were along on this party, Doc . . ."

The doctor frowned and looked up.

"Not much I can do, Ed. Depressed fracture of the skull—bone pressing on the brain. Only chance—get him to a hospital. It'll have to be quick, too."

"Nearest hospital is Springfield." Ed was thinking out loud. "Forty miles by road—roads cut to hell in that thaw last week. Frozen solid now—rough as No Man's land."

"Out of the question with that road," the doctor snapped. "Take too long, anyway. This is almost a matter of minutes."

"But, Doctor, surely—something— You can do something . . ." Dorothy was down on her knees in the slack of the roadway, pleading with him.

The doctor shook his gray head soberly.

"Stop the flow of blood, that's all. Wouldn't dare try to operate with the facilities I have here. If we can get him to Springfield soon enough— His only chance . . ."

The girl turned an imploring face to Ed. He captured her fluttering hands, pressed them tightly in one of his.

"I'm thinking, Dorothy. Let's see—" he yanked a watch from his pocket—"Whippoorwill Express is due through here in twenty minutes . . ."

"If we can put him on that train we can save him." The doctor looked up from a more searching examination of the skull wound. "Otherwise — depressed fracture . . ." He shrugged his shoulders.

"We've got twenty minutes to get on top and flag the train. We're a long way inside—take twenty-five minutes to reach the shaft if a man ran all the way . . ."

"But the electric motor, Ed," the girl protested.

"Power's been turned off all over the mine since 9:30—repairing dynamo. We had notice to prepare for a two hour shut down when we came on the bottom tonight."

"O-o-o-h . . ." Her voice trailed off.

Poor kid, Ed thought again. He must seem like a judge pronouncing the doom of—her man. He stole a glance at her. There were tears wetting the coal smudge on her white cheeks. Hardy had probably smudged her face that way himself. People always smudged each other on a mine party. A few minutes ago, laughing and playing. Now . . .

"There's the old 11th N. W. air course —cuts off more than half the distance to the bottom . . ." Ed spoke quickly, speculatively. "It's been abandoned for two, three years now. Maybe choked with falls—maybe full of gas or black damp—I don't know. But if a fellow could get through there at all he could do it in twenty minutes."

Sudden hope lighted Dorothy's face. She gazed at Ed, mutely appealing.

He met her eyes. His face whitened a little.

"I'll go," he said, and looked quickly away.

He jumped to his feet.

"Give me that hand ax, Pete—might need it. Let's see—better let me take that flashlight too." He extinguished the flame in his cap lamp. "Ought to have a flame to test for black damp," he muttered, "but if I ran into any gas with it—be goodby everything!"

"Ed, I'd go with you, but I've got to

stay with Hardy. Some one ought to go along though. Who's it going to be, boys?"

The doctor's glance swept the faces of the men grouped about. One and all they refused to meet his eyes. Their lamps, flickering in their caps, stamped new shadows on their faces as their features hardened before the doctor's penetrating gaze. The doctor was puzzled.

"No matter, Doc," Ed said quickly. "I don't need any help. Boys, get to the parting and stand by the motor. If the power comes on try to beat me to the bottom with the motor. I guess that's all. I can tap the 11th N. W. just a little way down the entry here."

Pete fell in step with Ed as he hurried down the track.

"You never make him, Ed, in dat air course. Lissen me. I pull track in dere t'ree year ago—top rotten den—t'ree year ago. Now, damn hell, get kill sure!"

"I'll take a chance, Pete."

"Wat you care 'bout straw boss? Plenty black damp, too . . ."

Ed left the track, ducking into a short stub entry that turned off the main haulage way at right angles. The way became rapidly narrower. He climbed over a fall of rock and slate, bent low to squeeze through a twisting, bottle neck opening and disappeared from view.

"Goo'by, Ed." Pete's stolid farewell came faintly to his ears.

HE PLUNGED along in the old abandoned passage, the broad beam of his flashlight boring into the darkness, ferreting a tortuous way through the stark ruins. The light exposed piteously the near limits of the utter desolation—the ragged, cluttered line of the crumbling rib coal at either hand; the fearfully pitted roof; the torn roadway strewn with top coal and clogged here and there with fallen slate and rock, and snags of timbers.

The steel rails and the soundest of the ties had long since been removed from the condemned entry. Such ties as remained had been left, helter-skelter, on the roadway.

The fallen top coal crunched loosely under Ed's heavy pit shoes as he ran. A haze of dust lifted up after each footfall and hung in the dry dead air.

Sulphur particles glinting coldly from the cracks and seams in the top and rib coal, and more greenish white incrustations here and there piercing the dust that lay heavy over the slack in the roadway, only emphasized the isolation. The place was as remote as the moon—ghastly and unreal.

But Ed, being a practical miner, was unaffected by these forbidding aspects. None knew better than he what the real dangers were. He continued headlong down the entry, slipping, lurching, reeling in the insecure footing of the coal cluttered roadway; leaping ties and rocks, ducking low roofs and sagging crossbars, circling close to the crumbling rib at times to avoid a loosely hanging rock, clambering over falls of rock and slate.

His actions were instinctive; his mind was elsewhere. Pete's words kept recurring to him: "Wat you care 'bout straw boss?"

What did he care, indeed? Why was he risking his life in here? It *was* a risk—nothing short of taking his life in his hands. It had not been without reason—that silent, half sullen, grim refusal of the men to accompany him in here. He did not blame them. Then why was he here?

And Dorothy—Dorothy had not worried much about his coming in here, he thought bitterly. No, all her worrying was for Hardy. Dorothy might have shown a decent concern about—

A piece of slate turned under Ed's foot. He fell sidewise, bringing his heavy bulk up against a standing timber. The timber, dry rotted, broke under the impact, letting down a crossbar and a shower of top coal.

Ed dodged the heavy wooden crossbar and rolled out from under the rain of top coal, maintaining a death clutch on his hand ax and flashlight—the implements

that might mean life to him now, as well as to Hardy.

A dull staccato booming sounded from deep within the rock; a sharper note rippled through the thick strata of slate over his head. Ed sprang up, stumbled, whipped his body erect again.

Long months of working, stones grinding and slipping against stones; infinitesimally, interminably, had set the stage—the entry came in like a clap of thunder.

Ed, entombed in the dust and roar, reached frantically to his side, felt his knuckles scrape against the rib coal, and with this to guide him, plunged blindly, stumblingly forward.

Once safely out of it he laughed. He did not realize it, but there was a quality about his laughter that was strangely reminiscent of the note in Dorothy's which had been puzzling him.

He looked at his watch and hurried on faster than before. A distant muffled rumble was carried to his ears as some remote room within the abandoned territory came in. As he passed along he began to observe the old room necks which had been turned off this entry long before it had ever been called into temporary use as an air course. In most cases the rooms were obliterated, caved in flush with the entry.

Suddenly Ed stopped short before a fall of slate which spread from rib to rib and from floor to roof, choking the entry as completely as the rooms turned off at right angles had been choked. He stopped only long enough to assure himself that there was no way over the top, no way around. Then he turned back down the entry in the direction from which he had come.

Swerving suddenly, he ducked into a room which he had observed before was clear as far as the first crosscut, or connecting passage. There was a chance, a very slight chance, that in that labyrinth of worked out rooms and crosscuts he could weave his way around and come out on the old air course again on the other side of the fall.

Ed hurried, but with extreme care. If the entry were as unpredictable as dynamite, then these sub-passages had all the sensitiveness of nitro-glycerin; they were ready to come in at a touch.

Ed found the first crosscut clear as far as the fourth room. There an ancient cave-in raised an impenetrable barrier. Going deeper into the room, weaving in and out between the high heaped piles of slack, the falls of coal and slate, he managed to reach the fourth room through the second crosscut. The fifth he had to enter by the same passage. It was a close squeeze. He had to crawl on his hands and knees the last few yards.

As he straightened up, congratulating himself, his shoulders scraped the coal roof.

IT WAS all over in a few seconds. Ed saved his life by one quick lunge. When he could look back the crosscut was not there. The narrow opening through which he had squeezed was filled solid with coal and slate.

His face went white. The way behind was closed! He could not go back now if he wanted to. He could only go forward. And if somewhere ahead of him the way forward were closed . . .

With a chill in his blood he turned his attention to the next room. A hasty examination showed both the first and second crosscuts blocked! There were only three crosscuts connecting these rooms. With a prayer on his lips, he plunged deep into the long room to the third. It was open—barely.

Down on his belly in the coal, wriggling, pushing with elbows and toes, he succeeded in squirming through.

He had kept track of the rooms. Three more and he should be able to regain the old air course on the other side of the fall. Just three more.

One of these rooms Ed reached through the second crosscut, the next through the first. But the last room he did not reach at all.

They were closed, those life giving

crosscuts to the last room; first, second and third, they were all closed!

With the calmness of death he worked his way quickly along past the three closed cuts to the room neck which normally would have opened into the abandoned air course. It was closed, of course, by the same fall which he had been seeking to get around. He had known it would be; he was certain he had not miscalculated. What else was there to do though but make the attempt? Everything else was closed too.

He played his light nervously about on the black slate and gray rock which choked the room at its intersection with the entry. Tons upon tons solidly mounting to the roof. Not a chance . . .

He started. Blood rushed into his blanched face. His hands trembled so that he had difficulty in directing the beam of his flashlight. There, near the far rib wall, high up near the roof, his light flooded through a two foot hole. And on the other side of the hole was the open entry!

Ed scrambled up the slope of the fall and dropped to his knees before the opening. A single glance told him everything. A huge slab of rock in falling had bridged itself over another slab. Other rocks had piled over and around these. The bridged rock had been loosened. It seemed to be holding only by a thread. But it was holding—and there was the opening, beckoning.

He held his breath while he heaved his ax through. He heard it clattering down the slope of the fall in the entry. He held his breath again while his heart pounded as he gathered himself for a headlong dive after the ax.

He had encountered these rock jambs before in his clean-up work. You never could tell about them—whether it would take dynamite or a finger touch to bring them crashing down. This was no place to experiment. He crouched and sprang, regardless of consequences on the other side.

His large frame unlimbered, his body and legs following his head and shoulders through the opening in a slow, graceful arc. He threw up his arm to protect his face as the jagged rock slope rose to receive him. He lit heavily and rolled to the bottom.

He sat up a little dazedly and grinned. It was not a laugh, it was not a smile—just a grin. He had added a few bruises to those already received, but he was on the right side of the fall. He still had his flashlight and his ax—and his life. He looked at his watch. Yes—and Hardy's life.

He sprang up and went charging down the entry as before, his light sweeping back the darkness ahead.

Ed was breathing heavily. Nowhere in the old workings was the air anything but bad. It was growing worse as he proceeded.

It was less dry in the entry now. Dust no longer covered everything. Moisture clung to the roof in tiny drops. A white mold covered the timbers and long festoons of white cottony fungi dangled limply from overhead wooden crossbars.

The fungi, like ghostly fingers, slapped him wetly, softly in the face sometimes as he chose to plunge through it rather than dodge around. The stale air was becoming more dank and oppressive with every breath.

An unpleasantly sweetish, musty odor was noticeable. The odor arose, Ed knew, from decaying vegetable matter, the rotting ties and timbers so long and so closely confined in here. It was not particularly noxious. But so often it betokened the presence of something that *was* noxious—black damp!

Black damp, that scourge of the coal mines; a gas, invisible, almost odorless—unfelt in its earlier effects, only announcing itself after it is so often too late to combat its insidious grip.

A FLAME will not burn in the presence of black damp; it is a positive test. But there was inflammable gas lurking in some of these passages. Ed dared not light a match. In the absence of other

tests black damp announces itself by causing physical collapse. And collapse in here would be the end for two men, Ed told himself grimly.

No, if there were black damp here in any quantity he would have to become aware of it before that. He would have to keep himself keenly alive to his physical condition. He seemed to be tiring faster than he should—but maybe he was just imagining it.

He stumbled, half fell, recovered himself. His feet seemed so heavy, so clumsy. But then, pit shoes were not a toe dancer's fancy. He had been sprinting ever since he started, too. Normal for him to feel like dragging his feet, he supposed.

He stumbled again and blamed the loose slack in the roadway. He noticed that he was bent over as he ran. He straightened up. Black damp, heavier than air, tends to concentrate at the floor. Did he only imagine it, or were his legs sort of spraddled out—the better to sustain the weight of his body?

He stumbled again. This time he did not blame the slack in the roadway.

If he turned back at once his reserve strength would probably be sufficient to carry him to safety, he knew. But to turn back now meant death to Handsome Hardy. He kept on, increasing his pace a little.

Paralleling this abandoned entry for a short distance at this point was a live haulage entry. Somewhere ahead a short crosscut afforded an exit from this dead passage to the live one. Ed's immediate object was to reach the crosscut, break through the stopping into the live entry, and fill his bursting lungs with fresh air.

He did reach the crosscut. Legs bowed and wabbling, body bent, lungs blowing like a bellows he reeled into the stub entry and staggered to the stopping.

The stopping looked formidable, like solid masonry. He knew it was not. Just thin pine boards and plaster—all that separated him from a breath of air and life.

He raised his ax. But at this last moment his legs gave way beneath him. He half turned and crumbled to the floor.

Even so, in falling, he realized his project; the ax splintered the yellow pine of the stopping. With a prodigious effort he raised himself to his knees, crashed his ax again into the stopping. Butting his head against the splintered boards he tore his way through, the rest of his body following the dead weight of his shoulders and chest.

He lay gasping in the cool sweet air of the haulage entry, every breath adding to his strength. He tugged out his watch again. He could rest a moment and still make it—if everything went right.

It was so nice to lie still. Why should he go back into that devil's tunnel? He would have to if he were to save Hardy. But had he not taken enough chances? He had won so far, but a fellow could not win always. Had he not about played out his luck? The next chance he must take would be the blindest of them all.

He had no way of telling how far in that abandoned entry the lung shriveling gas extended. And there were no other exits between where he was and the bottom. He would have to take a deep breath, plunge in and run, trusting to luck he would pass through the black damp area before it got him. It was like diving into water to swim through a pipe when you did not know the length of it. It was playing your luck too far.

But all the time his mind protested, he knew he would go. The old bulldog streak in him . . . That, and something else—his passionate love for Dorothy.

"If this was what she wanted most, she'd get it," was how Ed would have summed it up.

He took six deep, regular breaths in succession, held the last and plunged back into the old entry.

When he commenced breathing again his nostrils were struck by that same dank and musty odor.

He had no way of telling at first whether or not it denoted black damp. It could not be long before he would know, though. He was grimly aware of that.

About twelve breaths and he would have his sentence—live or die.

At about the eighth breath he was reasonably certain, and he sent up a silent prayer. A painful giddiness rocked his head and he was seized with a sickening nausea. His legs commenced to buckle under him; he felt that each step would be his last.

The entry was becoming wetter. The moisture no longer clung to the roof—it dripped from it. Fireclay, white and sticky, oozed up from between the black waste of slack in the roadway.

At the twelfth breath Ed was still on his feet. The fourteenth passed—the sixteenth. He began to hope, for while he felt no better, he felt no worse.

He was sloshing along in water up to his ankles now. Soon it reached his knees. It was inevitable that he should fall.

The cold water acted as a stimulant, a refreshant. He arose, splashing and dripping, to feel a degree of his old strength surging through his limbs again. The painful pounding continued in his head, but he was less dizzy and the nausea was diminishing.

He knew the symptoms now for what they were, and he exulted. He was experiencing nothing more serious than the after effects, the hangover from his original inhalations of black damp.

The flashlight still burned. Ed crashed through the water and continued on his headlong way.

HE REACHED the bottom. Little Martin, the cager, saw him coming and paused in his work to stare. Oblivious of his startling appearance, Ed stopped, panting, before the telephone and snatched the receiver.

"No juice—and no phone," Little Martin told him.

"Then bell a cage—quick," Ed gasped. But of course there would not be any cage, he realized instantly, if the power were not on. "How soon—cage—Martin?"

"Be ten minutes anyway, maybe more. What's the matter—somebody hurt?"

"Straw boss." Ed wrested his watch from his wet pocket; the train was due in exactly three minutes. "Got to make it up escape shaft—flag the train. You telephone if power goes on in time, see? My watch might be slow.

Ed turned and raced a few steps down the entry. He burst through the double doors into the air course, shivering in his wet clothes as he was struck by the blast of winter air fanned down the shaft immediately ahead.

He started up the stairs of the escape shaft. Dripping water had turned the iron steps into smoothly curved pillows of ice. The handrails, floor gratings, walls—everything was sheathed in ice.

Ed tried to be careful. But he was not careful enough. He slipped, fell down a whole flight. He lost his flashlight; he could hear it clattering below.

He did not need the light. He knew these stairs well. He started up again, using both hands on the steps as well as his feet. He had to be fast as well as careful. He was. He slipped again and again, but, bruised and battered, he reached the top.

He glanced down the railroad tracks eagerly, fearfully. He could see the headlight of a fast approaching train. A long whistle sounded on the cold night air. He thrilled—the old Whippoorwill. He was on time.

"The flashlight, buddy," Ed addressed a repairman in the dynamo room.

The man, mouth agape, thrust out the light.

"Make a temporary repair and give 'em the juice below. Get a cage on the bottom, quick."

Ed whipped around and ran for the track. His clothes were frozen stiff now, but excitement and exertion combined to keep him from feeling chilled.

In the blaze of the approaching headlight he stood on the track and swung his flash. A nervous blast from the whistle came at the last minute and Ed stepped aside as the train roared past with a rush of air and a grinding of brakes. He ran

down the track past the dark silent string of Pullmans to the steam shrouded locomotive.

Up in the cab in the warmth and glow of the seething fire box, Ed, panting heavily, explained the situation to the engineer.

"How long will it take 'em to get him up here?" the engineer wanted to know. He was a heavily built, square jawed, hard boiled looking individual.

"Can't tell exactly—bringing him out as fast as they can. Fifteen or twenty minutes—not over twenty-five . . ."

"Twenty-five minutes!" The engineer snorted. "Half an hour you might as well say. What the hell do you think we're runnin'—a merry-go-round? This is the crack train of the line. Stop the old bull-of-the-woods for half an hour? Go dream some more, big boy."

His hand moved toward the throttle, paused as he seemed to read some of the desperation in Ed's face.

"If five minutes would do you any good—"

"It wouldn't."

"Then I'm sorry, bud—no chance." His voice was kinder. "Hell, I couldn't do that. It'd be my job. We're competin' heavy with the Alton and Wabash. Been runnin' behind them every night this week. A half hour layover here tonight and I'd be gandy dancin' tomorrow. See?" His hand clamped over the throttle. "Anyway, what's the rush? No. 78 will be along in about three hours. Three hours can't make much difference."

He opened the throttle. Steam surged through the cylinders, the locomotive was enveloped in a hissing white cloud. The train commenced to move.

Ed's lips pressed together, his eyes narrowed. Three hours he knew would make *all* the difference. The train was slowly gathering speed. After all he had been through . . . His eyes blazed. There was only one way—he hated to do it—the engineer was a good fellow but . . .

In one bound Ed cleared the space between them, grasped the engineer by his broad shoulders and wrenched him backward from the throttle.

The engineer, recovering from the surprise attack, whirled, beat off the grip and swung murderously, planting his fist in Ed's face, staggering him back against the side of the cab.

Ed pulled himself up and came on again. The two crashed together in the middle of the cab in a bloody, smashing tornado of give and take. Toe to toe, they stood, rocking each other with trip-hammer blows.

The big engineer was the fresher. His huge arms drove his battering fists with the power and precision of the piston rods of his locomotive. But Ed was the more desperate. He had been through too much tonight to risk losing out now. The extreme emergency gave him added strength and fierceness.

ED LANDED two smashing hooks, left and right, that rocked the engineer to his toes. A straight blow to the chest before he had recovered hurled him back against the firebox. Bawling to the pop eyed fireman for help, he bore in again, his rush carrying Ed across the floor, banging him against the side of the cab.

With difficulty keeping clear of the fireman who was dancing around trying to hit him with his shovel, Ed fought his way out to the middle of the floor.

There was blood trickling into his eyes, half blinding him. His fists were lead heavy. He knew he could not last much longer. It had to be now or not at all. He crouched to duck a vicious blow of the fireman's shovel. In a flash he saw the finish.

The engineer was crowding him. Ed straightened from his crouch, unleashing an uppercut from close to the floor. It connected with the point of the engineer's jaw and he went down and—out.

Ed whirled in the now gently swaying cab and pulled the air. Lacking in finesse perhaps, that method of stopping a train, but wanting nothing in effective-

ness. The train bucked to a jolting stop.

Sidestepping another of the fireman's slicing shovel blows, Ed ducked to the back of the cab. The fireman rushed him with raised shovel. Grabbing up a lump of coal from the floor, Ed hurled it at him point blank. The fireman struck out blindly with his shovel, swinging it like a ball bat. It connected with the coal, shattering it. The fragments flew about the locomotive cab like shrapnel. Glass from a broken window tinkled.

Before the fireman could raise his shovel again to strike, Ed stepped in close, clipped him twice with his fists and grabbed the shovel handle. He planted a heavy shoe in the pit of the fireman's stomach and jerked back, wresting the shovel from his grasp.

A ruthless gleam shone in Ed's eyes.

"You—you rat!" he bellowed. "Slice a fellow with a shovel when his back's turned, will you? I'll show you—" He swung the shovel back for striking.

"For God's sake, no!"

The fireman cowered before him like a whipped pup.

Ed held the shovel poised for a moment, then threw it down. It grated harshly on the steel of the floor. But no more harshly than Ed's voice as he ordered the fireman to back the train to the coal shaft.

"Here, here. What's going on up here?"

Ed turned at the sound of a blustery, officious voice to see a fat, red face poke aside the bottom of the canvas curtain. Little snapping black eyes set in the face like pieces of coal were staring up at the fireman.

The face withdrew and reappeared higher up with an accompaniment of official brass buttons and a tight blue uniform, as the conductor mounted the steps into the cab.

"Didn't you hear me shouting? Who broke that window? Are you drunk? What do you mean, jerking these coaches around? Why are you backing the train—"

His voice broke and he gasped as he got a good look at Ed's torn clothes and bloody, coal smeared face. He gasped again as his uneasy eyes fell on the engineer stretched on the floor.

"What—what . . ." he gulped. "A holdup?"

No further words could escape him. His red face had faded to a pasty yellow; his little eyes were filled with terror. The brass buttons quivered on his tight blue uniform.

"No holdup, mister," Ed assured him, breathing hard. "Take it easy. I've just induced the fireman to back up to the mine, that's all. Got a badly injured man there I want to put on your train. Get him to Springfield—question of life and death."

"Is—is that all?" The red commenced to creep back into the moon face. The brass buttons stopped quivering. A pudgy hand jerked out in the direction of the prone engineer.

"What—what's that for? Who did that?"

"I did."

"Is he dead?" The brass buttons commenced to agitate.

"No."

"Why did you do it?"

"He wouldn't wait to take on the injured man. I told him they might be twenty minutes bringing him up. He thought it was too long to wait."

The conductors fears were allayed by Ed's quiet voice. His pompous bluster returned.

"You'll do time for this, my man—criminal assault. Unwarranted criminal assault. The engineer was well within his rights in refusing to hold the Whippoorwill Express for twenty minutes. I never heard of such a thing. It's outrageous. I'll be pleased to appear in court against you myself.

"You, Cosgrave—" he faced the fireman who had by now brought the train to a stop at the coal shaft—"assume the engineer's duties and start the train at once. And you, man—" he looked at Ed and tried to register sternness—"you will have to shovel coal until the engineer—"

"Me shovel coal?" Ed said.

His head was bursting with a throbbing, knife splitting pain—the effect of the black damp. His bruised and battered body ached. His eyes were almost swollen closed. He laughed and it was almost more of a leer than a laugh, coming from between those puffed and bleeding lips. It hurt to laugh, but he laughed anyway. It was so funny. Little roly-poly in the brass buttons, trying to make people believe he had something to do about starting a train!

THE CONDUCTOR blustered louder, trying to retain a grip on his slipping confidence by listening to the sound of his own voice.

"All the same to me, my man. If you won't shovel I'll get somebody who will."

"Try and get 'em. They're all my friends in this town. Try and get 'em."

"Cosgrave, start the train. You'll have to manage by yourself for a while."

The brakeman shot a glance at Ed.

Ed leered.

He shuddered and made no move to grasp the throttle. He was not the man the engineer was.

"Cosgrave, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to bring yourself to the notice of your superiors. Start the train."

The brakeman did not budge.

"I can't stay here twenty minutes without train orders, endangering the lives of all my passengers to save one man." A whine had crept into the bluster.

"You know damn' well there's no risk. What are your block signals for?"

The conductor tugged away at a tight trousers pocket. He flourished a small automatic apprehensively and pointed it at Ed in a last desperate attempt to dominate the situation.

"Get out of here now or I'll shoot."

Ed laughed his painful, twisted laugh.

The automatic wavered; the conductor lowered it altogether and started backing away.

"I'll—I'll have you arrested. I'll call an officer and have you arrested."

Ed continued laughing.

"I'll telegraph . . ." His voice was loud and hoarse.

"Telegraph office is closed."

"I'll—telephone . . ."

Ed laughed louder.

"Try and get a connection after we've tipped off the girl at the switchboard."

Fear and rage made the conductor mute. In a sudden apoplectic panic he pawed aside the canvas curtain and partly climbed, partly fell down the steps of the cab.

The fireman, with a sidelong glance at Ed, slunk after him.

"Stay here," Ed roared. "Grab that shovel. Keep your steam up."

While the fireman shoveled, Ed leaned weakly against the side of the cab, laughing to himself. It was so funny. All those brass buttons . . . Lord, his head was hammering. And that funny red face . . . Lord, if his head would only stop aching. It was hard to think. That—black damp. He was so tired, too. If he could lie down for a little bit somewhere . . .

Spots started whirling before his eyes. He winced as he swiped the back of his hand across his bruised eyes. It was getting hard to see, and it was not the blood—not the blood that made it that way. . .

What the hell—somebody in the cab! White collar guy. And— Yes, hiding behind him roly-poly with the brass buttons again.

Ed shook his head, fighting back the numbing darkness and the bright spots before his eyes. Straightening up, he launched himself out from the side of the cab and stood swaying.

"Who are you and what do you want?" he demanded.

"I work for this railroad. What's the trouble here?"

Ed told him.

"Do you realize the gravity of what you are doing?" the white collared man in the dark tailored coat wanted to know. "Do you realize you are risking arrest, imprisonment?"

"I've risked more than that tonight." It almost started Ed to laughing again.

"Then you positively refuse to let anybody run this train?"

"I do, until they get Hardy aboard."

The man swept Ed with his shrewd, penetrating glance.

"All right," he said tersely. "You're holding all the cards, it seems. You win—this deal. It is good sometimes to live in a small town and have every one your friend, isn't it? You don't mind if I stay up here in the cab, I presume?"

"Stay as long as you want to. But *you*—Roly-poly—you get out, quick." The conductor hurried. "And you," he told the fireman, "keep on shoveling coal."

Ed leaned up against the side of the cab again. The sickening dizziness was sweeping over him in waves, his bruised body ached, his head hammered unceasingly. The blackness with its whirling brilliants came and went—came and went as he fought it with an iron will.

Dorothy—Dorothy was in the mine, too. No place for her—in a coal mine. He would have to see Hardy about that—make him promise never to let Dorothy go down in a mine again. Hardy owed him that much. Lord, why didn't they come? Why didn't . . .

What was this—somebody talking?

"Why, hello— Hello, Doc. Didn't hear you come—been waiting for you. Let's see—something I wanted to tell you. Something— Oh, yes, here's another patient for you, Doc."

He swung out an arm in the direction of the engineer, who, under the ministration of the white collar man, was showing signs of recovery.

Ed swayed forward. The doctor caught and supported him.

"You're the likeliest looking prospect for me around here, boy," he muttered huskily.

"Doc, listen. Don't you hear—Doesn't it sound like Dorothy calling?"

"You bet it's me calling! Ed, Ed, make them let me in. I can't get this curtain unfastened."

And then she was standing before Ed in the cab, a quiver on her lips, a mist in her eyes.

Then it seemed to Ed that it was not the doctor who had his arm around him—it was Dorothy! It *must* be Dorothy. The doctor would not be kissing him!

The locomotive cab seemed to careen. He clung to Dorothy and fought desperately to retain his shred of consciousness. He would be damned if he was going to pass out now!

She was crying, her face pressed against his, and saying things. He got some of it:

"It's you, never been any one else but you, honey . . . You're all right, sure?"

Swathed in bandages and blankets, Ed grinned up at the doctor as he took his temperature the next day. The superintendent of the Morning Glory mine was standing by his bedside too.

"You're some battered, Ed, but you'll be on your feet in a day or two in spite of me." The doctor grinned back at him. Feeling in his pocket, he pulled out a card. "Here's something the vice president of the St. L. & C. railroad gave me in the locomotive cab last night. He said to give it to you and tell you if you were ever in need of a job to come and see him."

The mine superintendent cleared his throat.

"Go and see him, Ed. I don't want you overlooking any bets, but listen to my proposition first.

"We're going to need an extra face boss here in the Morning Glory as soon as we can get those rooms opened in the Main West. I suppose I should have told you before, but we've had you slated for it all the time. That's why we brought in Hardy when we needed a straw boss on the night shift—we were saving you for something better.

"The first of the year Mr. Watkins is being transferred to the Brush Creek mine. That'll call for a new assistant mine manager here. I've been watching you; I know you can handle it. How'd you like to make a step from face boss to assistant mine manager the first of the year, Ed?"

Ed grinned.

"Coal minin's my game," he said.

LAMPOO'S RED HALO

A Swashbuckling Tale of the Malay Archipelago

By FRANK BISSON

"BLAST it! It looks as if we're in it up to th' blinkin' neck this time, sir! To finish me cruise in them swine's bellies!"

"My God!"

"Gods, Mister Mate, gods," Captain Wadham grimly corrected his mate. "Even in these strained circumstances don't leave out the gods of your recent adoption. It isn't respectful of you."

"Yes, sir. What's it matter? 'Tain't as if I treats 'em serious. Keep yer 'ead down, Captain! One o' them there pizened a'ars in yer gullet'd just about wind yer watch up fer good. Blow y' up like a month dead porpuss, so it would. Darn them blinkin' sleepy 'eaded Dutchmen at Tontoli. Why in 'ell don't they keep these damn' blighters in check?"

"Aye, why?" the skipper echoed bitterly.

"They're paddlin' in ter send us another shower, darn their stinkin' black 'ides. They got th' 'ol 'ooker lookin' like a porkypine in 'is best Sunday suit already. Look out, sir! Maybe they'll try ter rush us before it gets dark?"

"They won't, Mister Mate," Captain Wadham confidently predicted. "Between us we must have potted a score last

time they tried. Thank the gods—yours and mine, Mister Mate—they've no firearms. Warn your men that they're closing up."

"Hey, you fella," Pindar bawled. "Fall down belly b'long you one time! Man o' bush he come again. I'll take the *prau* on th' port quarter, sir, an' leave the big one t' you. Your gun shoots quicker an' straighter'n mine. Yow! Y' black cow!" He spat with vicious satisfaction as a Menado warrior, who had leaped on the *prau's* fore platform to get a better sight, took a slug of lead between the eyes before his bowstring twanged.

"More shark bait," the skipper laughed, as the plugged bowman sagged, and would have fallen back inboard but for the prompt action of a friend who pitched him unceremoniously overboard. "Don't waste your shells, Mister Mate," he urged. "They're paddling with ducked heads and bent backs. Wait till they give you a bigger target."

"Yes, sir. I know, sir. Jus' like my fat 'ead," the mate agreed. "Got yer! Yer blurry black sojer!" he yelped ecstatically, as the steersman momentarily raised his head to sight on his course, and took a bullet in his open mouth instead.

"Fine, Mister Mate, fine," Captain Wadham approvingly commented. "They sure taught you how to shoot straight in the King's Navee. Look out! Your man's let the sweep swing out, and she's sheering beam on. She'll bash into us. I thought so! Sing out to your hands to stand by if the swine try to board. Lively, Mister Mate! I'll send a few through their backs as they show up."

Pindar bawled his orders and the hands rushed over to port. The unguided *prau* struck the *Bayonne's* port quarter, and raised friction fire from her own paint and the schooner's as she scraped and staggered along her side. Captain Wadham followed her along the poop's length, picking his targets, and firing with cold precision.

The Line Island crew, armed with mast knives and iron belaying pins, hacked and bashed at any hand or head that came within arm's reach. Not to be outdone, their cook shoveled the blazing coal out of the furnace of his galley stove, and tossed that among the Menado sea gipsies in the passing *prau*. Those who had not been put out of action with the ten pound belaying pins leaped for the comparative safety of the shark infested Macassar Channel.

As they drifted clear of the bow Pindar sped aft to join the skipper again. But the second bunch had wisely backed water in face of the Old Man's rapid fire. Circling well out of range, they followed the drifting *prau* and her swimming crew. Master and mate drew breath of happy relief as they watched them go.

"I wisht we 'ad an eight pounder 'ere," Pindar fervently exclaimed. "One like we 'ad in— Well, that survey sloop I 'opped it from. We oughta 'ave, too, knockin' about these blasted waters. But them blurry ijits as 'as th' say-so lifts their nice pink paws up in 'orror when we asks for somethin' to protect ourselves from walkin' graveyards like them chaps yonder."

"Aye. International complications, Mister Mate."

"Yes, sir. Them's it. Sun'll set in about ten minutes. Be dark as the earl of 'ell's Sunday weskit in another ten," Pindar pointed out, with a wave of his arm to where an incandescent sun balanced ready to dip on the black smudge that was East Borneo on the western horizon. "What's goin' ter 'appen then?"

"That's on the knees of the gods, your gods especially, Mister Mate," the skipper laughed. "The only certain thing is that they'll hang on to us until it's hopeless. See—they're picking up the other lot. Whistle to your new gods for a breeze, Mister."

"Take a good whistle ter reach them wooden 'orrers a thousan' miles off," Pindar muttered dolefully. "If we'd a motor in 'er starn, or them blinkin' monsoons'd return ter dooty, might be some chance, sir."

BUT NIGHT banked down on them without raising as much wind as would flutter a stay-sail. The yelps of the Menados floated across at intervals. Failing wind the whites guessed, if the brains the Lord had endowed them with were worth a cent a spoonful, the wipe-out would happen soon after dawn, when the two *praus* would be joined by a fleet from the bush rivers close by.

They had cleared at Macassar a week before for Manila. With even dog's luck they should have been a thousand miles ahead on their stretch. But thanks—though it was not exactly thanks that either offered—to the break in the monsoon, they had not made even a quarter of that distance. And the lapse of the periodical wind had left them absolutely at the mercy of the four knot China Current that swept eternally south from the Sulu Sea through the Macassar Strait.

Pindar prowled around the main deck pricking and kicking his black relations—they were all his relations—into needle point alertness. Captain Joe catfooted about the poop. Occasionally the hunting *praus* ventured in close enough to send an odd arrow or two aboard, but never a head showed above their rails as their weight carried them past. And the dip of their paddles was so soft and stealthy that the vigilance of those aboard the *Bayonne* dared never for an instant be relaxed.

Captain Joe Wadham was his own owner. A man of the world—in the word's wider sense—he stood out, a son of Anak, among the fellowship of wild adventurers whom the free life of the Islands draws together as a magnet draws steel chips. His Maker had generously left out that sprinkling of yellow corpuscles that breed fear. He preferred sailing craft to steam because his dynamic energy demanded an outlet in exercise that no steamer could give him.

Pindar, his mate, was an Essex man, whose hide had been salted in lobster boats before his brick red top had stretched a yard from his heels. Pindar was a valuable man to have; careful of his ship—he loved every rib of the old hooker—ready, always, to listen when the Old Man was in the mood to chat, but never the one to force his company on Captain Joe when it was not wanted. A man, too, who had a way with him in the handling of Kanaka crews, who knew the kinks in their peculiar mentality to a hair. He should have known, too.

Few men of Pindar's years had done quite so much to improve the breed of mankind in the Islands. He was, when kind fate sent him that way, the husband of the plump daughter of the Kalapa of Sudut in the Line Islands, and the father of her four children, whose hair, the color of dockyard oakum, bore eloquent testimony to their claim on the sorrel topped Pindar.

There were—men are but men and the seas are wide—other ladies on other isles. But to Pindar's credit, let it be said that he always meant Repeao, the Kapala's daughter, when he referred to his "missus".

Captain Joe, with the night sight sailors have, saw the mate come aft.

"I believe the land's drawing closer, sucking us in, Mister Mate," he said, halting at the poop break.

Whatever his other failings may have been, Captain Wadham was always most punctilious in addressing his subordinate by the title his rank carried. And Pindar, whose knowledge of navigation could have been printed on his tarry thumbnail, deeply appreciated this courtesy from one whose superior as a navigator could only have been found on the bridge of a crack liner.

"I think so, too, sir. We'll beach in less'n no time if we don't find wind. An' these Menado swines is a tar'ble bad lot. *Kai-kai* th' bunch of us if they gets us."

"Nothing surer. Try the lead again, Mister Mate. Not much hope, but we might get bottom. If we did we could lower the anchor to check her drift. Wouldn't grip, of course, in that shifting sand underfoot, but it might help."

"It might, sir. Hey, you Bosun," he called. "Take-um lead cast."

Kali, the Kanaka boatswain—he was

Pindar's brother-in-law—carried the big dipsy lead to the bows. In a minute or two he boomed—

"All leady, fol'lid, sarr!"

"Leggo," Pindar ordered. "No bottom, sir," he reported.

Not that he need have. Captain Joe was at his elbow and knew.

"Hell, Mister Mate," he confessed, "I'd hate worse than cholera to lose this old girl. I love every dirty bit of her."

"Me, too, sir," Pindar sighed, and something solidly like a throaty sob cut his words. "Long time since we blew a way out o' that there reef for 'er. 'Scuse me, sir. 'Tain't often I lets go o' me grip o' meself, sir."

And neither was it. It was all ten years since Captain Joe had sailed a leaky lifeboat into the lagoon at Sudat in the Lines, and stepped ashore on as inhospitable a beach as existed between Hell and Bias Bay. He might have been wiped out as he landed; and balancing things fairly, he could not have complained. His boatmen, Samoans, in defiance of his orders, rowed off, leaving him on a beach along which he could roam for a week—had he so desired—without meeting a soul.

BUT HE could not have wiped a sweat drop unnoticed. A thousand leaf screened eyes were on him. A thousand weapons were ready to do their legitimate work. And he knew it. But the ash on his cigar grew to half the cigar's length before it was negligently flicked off.

Then, when he had gazed more than his fill at the scenery, a voice had hushed at him from behind, and beyond his vision's range.

"What th' 'ell's brought yer 'ere, y' lunatic? Are yer mad? Is yer wits strewn? Swim off ter yer boat, y' crazy g'loot!"

"That you, Pindar?"

"Me name's Pindar. Oo th' 'ell are you?"

"Nobody in particular. I'm here in the way of business. I want you and anything up to a hundred strong boys to help me cut a passage through fifty feet of coral for a schooner that's been lifted bodily by a gale over a reef into a damned lagoon without a channel."

"Oo told yer me name?"

"I heard of you being here. You can't hide things in these waters. Don't be afraid. I'm not a blood money merchant working for your King's Navee. I know you're a deserter, but that's your palaver. All I want to know is will you get the men I need into your canoes, and follow me and those white livered hounds in my boat there. Help me to free my ship and you'll find me white."

"Wait. You got a blinkin' gall ter come 'ere at all, so y' 'ave, ooever y' are. 'Struth! Ye're lucky t' be alive, b'live me. I'll talk things over with me famb'ly an' let yer know. Keep on yer footmarks in th' meantime."

Wadham accepted the good advice. He had disposed of another cheroot before Red Pindar brushed through. And, although the almost naked deserter held the shipmaster in the hollow of his hand, the law of the sea sent his hand up. He saluted, as became an inferior.

"Yes, sir. What y' want exac'ly?"

The strain of the present emergency snapped the thread of his thoughts. Kali, his brother-in-law, came in handy as the nearest grindstone on which white dignity could be sharpened.

"Hey, y' dog faced son of a seacow! What'n 'ell t'ing savvy you? Ketchum dat fella leadline. Pullum alla sama 'ell, s'pose you no want me kickum your 'ead through your back teeth.

"Yes, sir. Me, too, sir. Hate worse'n 'ell t' lose 'er, but what'n 'ell can we do? Ground before daybreak, I sh'd say, unless th' monsoon comes back, which ain't blinkin' likely. I got me ol' navy revolver anyway; an', by God! I'll give 'em a run fer their money."

"And I promise you I will. Not much chance, though. This lot will bring the rest out—they're the scouts, I guess. Some of their big *praus* carry as many as forty paddles. Hide up the creeks and wait for a chance like this."

"Yes, sir. That's so, sir. Wisht we'd th' ol' *Wild Swan's* eight pounder 'ere. But we 'aven't, wuss luck."

"Belay the leadline," the skipper directed. "It may touch, and give us a drift on the bottom. Stand by it yourself and send your men back on the lookout."

Pindar stood with his educated fingers on the hummingline, his eyes on the sucking coast. For two long hours, during which four showers of arrows flew aboard, he was silent. Then he reported briskly:

"She's down an' touchin', sir. Mustn't be more'n sixty fathoms 'ere, sir. Feel th' lead bumpin'."

Wadham laid a sensitive finger on the leadline. It's thrumming was to him as pregnant of meaning as a patient's heart beats to a physician.

"Lumpy bottom, and— Hell, Mister Mate, she's shoaling fast! We could haul in twenty fathoms of slack and still get bottom! Jump for'rad, Mister Mate, and stand by the anchor. Quick! She's for it, and soon!"

Pindar ran, bellowing as he ran. He got there a second too late. The shelving coral took the *Bayonne* under her sternpost. It checked her way with a jerk that rattled the masts and made every block and parral in her rig dance like castanets.

The sternpost became a pivot. The China Current swung her round with her head to the open Strait, and her bilge had jammed on the spit.

"All aground, sir! Shall I leggo anchor?" Pindar yelled, when he had recovered his equilibrium.

"No, Mister Mate. What's the use. She's fast enough—too fast. Send your men back to the lookout, port and starboard. Keep your gun handy and your eyes well skinned for'rad. I'll stay aft. See your men have their belaying pins handy. We'll get the whole bunch off at daybreak. It's 'Die, dog, or eat the hatchet' this lovely morning."

"Yes, sir. Leave it to me."

"Right, Mr. Pindar. Couldn't have a better man there."

Even in that uncertain hour Dick Pindar felt a glow of pride in the expressed confidence in himself. Proper sort of skipper to sail with. A mate was a mate with Captain Wadham. He stationed his relations in position, then worked aft again.

"She's bilged 'ard, sir. 'Ell! 'Scuse me, sir. That there blasted Chiny Current beats all navigation when th' wind's missin'." Then he ran off at an angle. "That there gel o' mine in Sudut, Repeao, she's a fine bit, an' satisfyin'. An' them kids! Th' third's a gel—a little beauty! God!—'scuse, me, Captain Wadham, for talkin' about me own affairs—but ev'ry bit o' loveliness the Lord ever put inter life's cotched an' fixed in that little gel's eyes. Shouldn't talk like this. What's your orders, sir?"

"Look!" Captain Wadham pointed to the bush abeam that was showing through the dawn. "There they come to re-enforce our old pals on the quarter. You'll leave an awful lot of widows in these islands, Mister Mate. You'll be mourned worse than Solomon."

"Now, sir," Pindar protested, "don't you go for t' say that! I on'y got one missus—"

"All right, Mister Mate." The skipper smiled. "It'll all come out in the wash. Stand by, all!"

THE DAWN came, as it does in those seas, in a burst of prismatic glory. The China Current still pressed the *Bayonne's* bilge hard on the spit. Pindar sounded the well and found no more than the usual six inches. She had been built when Bath ship carpenters were the best in Maine, or, for the matter of that, on the whole Eastern seaboard. She had stood the shock well.

The dry end of the spit showed half a dozen cable lengths inshore. Soundings alongside gave thirteen feet. Her own length farther out, and she would have slipped over unhurt.

Lampoo-Batang, the giant sentinel of the Celebes Range, stood out, still black, against the pearling sunrise. And around

its crest, ten thousand feet in the heavens, hung a motionless halo that reflected the fiery red of the unseen rising sun; and it brought a fatalistic gesture from the cool skipper, and a salt-hide's psalm from the less restrained Pindar.

"We might kedge 'er off, sir," Pindar suggested, his eye on the *praus* that were gathering in the shadow of the bush.

"No use, Mister Mate. Our little capstan wouldn't budge her an inch. What we want is wind, and something with south in it. How many cartridges have you left?"

" 'Bout fifty, sir."

"Not much. I've even less. We'd need thousands. There's one of our last night's pals scooting inshore to report. Mister Mate, I'm afraid your populating activities in these islands are in danger of being summarily terminated unless we get that breeze darned soon. Its unlikely that we shall. Old Lampoo-Batang there is wearing his halo too peacefully for any wind to be stirring yet. I count eight *praus*, nine with the one astern. If more than one of them boards at a time we'll be swamped. It doesn't matter about me, Mister Mate. I've neither wife nor child. But you're different. Very."

"Oh, I dunno, sir," Pindar muttered, glancing half protestingly at his captain for bantering with apparent doom close aboard. "We ain't dead yet, an'—" as a sudden thought struck him—"we ain't damn' well goin' ter be if Dick Pindar c'n 'elp it. Hey, you fella!" he roared to his men. "Dem Menado fella he come *kai-kai* you one time, s'pose you no bash him *prau* damn' quick. Savvy? You, Kali. Hoist all dem big stone up from forepeak damn' smart. Layum alonga fore hatch, main hatch, some aft here. *Jildy-jildy!*"

The big rough lumps of sandstone from which the deck scrubbing holystones were chipped at sea, were hand-over-handed up from the peak and stacked. Old iron purchase blocks, pigs of kentlage, anything that had weight enough, was added. When all that could be done had been done Pindar sent them to their stations, and waited for the oncoming fleet.

The *praus* took fanwise formation and slanted upstream to let the current angle them out. The leading craft, from which the notorious Rambut-Ulah—the Hairy Snake—directed operations, left the fleet and made a complete and unhurried circuit around the stranded *Bayonne*, well out of pistol range, then returned to where his *praus* kept position head-on to the current waiting for his orders.

When they got them they scattered. Like giant centipedes with their rows of rapidly dipping paddles, they drew, each to his designated place. The *Bayonne* was soon the center of a ring that nothing short of a stiff breeze could break before the end came.

Rambut-Ulah had acquired a Snider and knew how to use it. As became a chief of his evil reputation he ventured in to draw the *Bayonne's* crew's fire, and gain an inkling of what he had to face. Through Captain Joe's binoculars he loomed big and brawny, his headdress a wild hodge-podge of quills and gorgeous feathers. The carefully stiffened mustache —a dozen coarse bristles to each side— that had gained him his name among that hairless race, was spiked out beyond his ears.

At five hundred yards his crew held water. Then, steadying himself on the stern platform, Rambut-Ulah lifted his treasured Snider, sighted coolly, and fired.

The black powder formed a haze that hid him for a minute. The big leaden bullet struck the water an oar's length from the schooner. At his command the paddles eased. His *prau* dropped gently down.

Rambut-Ulah was no mean marksman. He tried another shot. The bullet struck the rail a foot from Captain Wadham's stomach. The quick witted Nantucketer dropped with a howl that carried back, and wriggled out of sight behind the skylight. A burst of congratulations from all the fleet spouted up.

"Tell them Matey-fella come speaka me," the skipper whispered to the nearest Line Islander. "Tell him creep along bul-

wark alla sama dog. All you fella no showum head."

"No blurritt fear, sarr," the deckhand promptly assured him.

"KEEP down on the main deck," the skipper directed, when Pindar came along on all fours. "And see that your men keep low. That swine with the gun can shoot. I'll keep dog watch from here and let you know how things are working. The guy with the taxidermist's outfit in his wool's the lord high admiral, I guess. He'll probably try to board first himself for the glory of Menado. Hell, Mister Mate, I wish we'd wind enough to work off!"

"I b'live some's comin', sir," Pindar croaked after a glance inshore. "Look at th' ring round ol' Lampoo beginnin' ter whirl about! Looks like southeas' ter me. Maybe th' blasted monsoon's resoomin' dooty?"

"Maybe. It works that way sometimes. Look out! He's dropping down. If he gets within range I'll have a pop at the dingo. Gee!"

Rambut-Ulah had tried the range again. His bullet, this time, struck the Oregon pine mast, leaving a hole that could have housed a golf ball. Still beyond pistol range, the Menado pirate was completely master of their fates.

Kali, the boatswain, ventured a peep over the bulwark. A bullet plowed through his dense mop, missing his skull by a shaving's breadth. Pindar kicked him savagely.

"Stand by with the holystones, Mister Mate!" the skipper called. "He's sweeping round to rush us. Goodby, if it's goodby! Here he comes!"

Down swept the forty paddle *prau*. She impacted with a noise like the crushing of a great wicker crate. Rambut-Ulah leaped for the *Bayonne's* rail and vaulted aboard.

Pindar fired at him and, for once, missed. Thirty men were on board and around their chief before he could fire again. The five cartridges he managed to spend before Rambut-Ulah clubbed him with the long-barreled Snider were each good for one enemy.

Kali sent seventy pounds of jagged sandstone through Rambut-Ulah's *prau*, smashing two of the boatkeepers, and seeing the Macassar Channel swallow her before he took a spear thrust through his arm.

Captain Wadham emptied his Colt as he rose and came. A man dropped for each shell before Rambut-Ulah swung his Snider and sent the skipper's Colt flying across the deck. Reaching out to the rack, Captain Joe gripped a capstan bar—twenty-eight pounds of good American oak—and swinging it around his head as though it weighed but five, sailed in.

Skulls cracked, as eggshells crack at the tap of a spoon. Raiders fell and died from the devastating smashes of the huge bar. A shower of clubs and knives were hurled at him. All but one club, that struck his ribs, missed miraculously.

Pindar staggered upright from the scuppers. Calling from behind that he was there again to help, he unshipped the fathom long iron pump handle from the fife rail and lashed out.

"Good man, Mister Mate!" the skipper shouted back. "That's paid the swine!"

His big bar circled. *Crash!* and a Menado died.

"Leave this bunch to me and watch those other *praus!*" *Crash!* "Send your holystones through them as they come." *Crash!*

Lampoo-Batang's red halo left the crest and flew down the wind as the *Bayonne's* canvas started to thrash.

"Stand by to trim sail, Mister Mate!" Captain Joe whooped. *Crash!* "Damn the black swab! His brains are all over me."

"Hand to the wheel, Mister Mate! The old love's moving!"

Sweep and crash!

"Have your holystones ready for that fellow creeping up on your starboard bow. Here's your whack, you damned black ape!"

Sweep and crash. Sweep and crash.

Rambut-Ulah stood alone.

"S'long, sonny. Remember me to your father when you drop into hell. Here's your dime's worth!" as the last raider fell.

"Good man, Mister Mate, she's off! Steady as you go for midchannel there! Steady, so! Considering the life you've led, Mis—old shipmate, you're very strong yet.

"Throw those cattle to the sharks, living and dead. Watch your steering there! You and I, Dick Pindar'll, just drop down and drink one to the health of that little kid girl of yours in Sudat right now."

"Yes, sir. Very good o' yer, sir. Hey, you Bosun! Never mind playin' with that little scratch. Get them damn' decks cleaned up!"

The Tropical Scribbler *by* C. A. FREEMAN

HE WHO writes in English, and follows the devious trails of the tropics in search of a job, is as much of an adventurer as the pearler, trader, or prospector. For the writer of fiction or travel yarns who has an established reputation and a fat check awaiting him at various United States or British consulates, or who can touch a hard boiled editor for an advance, and get it, life is simple and not to be compared with that of the *hombre* who rambles into a Latin-American republic to find work either as a publicist or on an English language sheet. The Far East is also a hard nut to crack, although it possesses more English newspapers.

Usually the rambling writer has had American newspaper experience or, perhaps, been trained on British dailies, but his object is the same. He needs a job. In years he is mature and tropic suns have thinned his thatch or streaked it with gray. He carries no credentials but merely asks for work, stating his qualifications. No editor would think of asking him as to his habits. They are well known. If he speaks the language of the country in which he seeks employment, so much the better. Somewhere and somehow a place is made for him or he is helped on his way.

Perhaps he will hold a job only for one pay day; perhaps for more, but the result is almost inevitably the same. He wants to see what lies beyond the next hill, and when his pockets are lined he will drift in that direction. Perhaps the constant reading of exchanges adds to the itch of his feet.

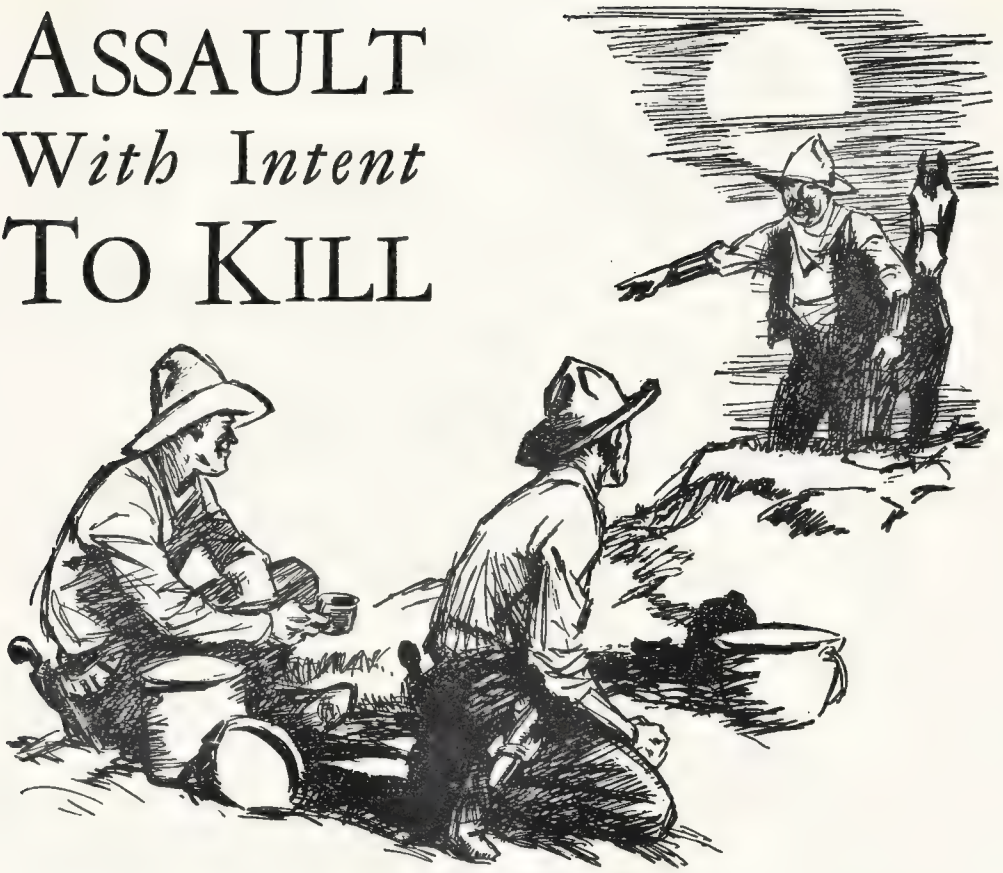
"Gee!" he will exclaim. "They're publishing an English daily in Maracaibo. Wonder if I could land?" Or he'll start figuring the price of a steamship ticket to Panama, the gateway of the world, where a man might pick up a connection with the *Herald*.

If he's in the Far East, he will inevitably reach Manila with its four dailies in English; and then if he doesn't fancy the Islands, commence talking steamship agents into offering a free passage to Shanghai in return for publicity to be published—the Lord knows where.

He may hit Tokio and hook up with the *Japan Advertiser*—if he is good, or perhaps Hong Kong, or Bankok sheets. It is all the same to the T. T. T. of the newspaper type. There is the lure of exotic lands, and no overshadowing pall of prohibition. In his hours of ease he may recline in a *bejuco* chair with bottle compartments in each arm and echo the call of the East—"Boy!"

The tropical scribbler will borrow your money without shame and will return it if he thinks you need it. Otherwise he considers it a perquisite. Sometimes he will send you a nice clipping about yourself, and call it square.

ASSAULT *With Intent* TO KILL



A Story of the Southwest Cattle Trails

By LEONARD K. SMITH

DUKE SPANGLER was a sort of local baron around Carmelita, the only big operator left thereabouts, and he wasn't so very big at that. But he owned about all there was in the county that was worth anything—the big ranch, four or five thousand head of stock, controlled the general store, the bank, the hotel, the saloons; and some of the other things wouldn't have been there if it wasn't for him and the gang that worked for him.

Of course, there were some little Mexican villages stuck around here and there, and along some of the streams were some crop farmers and homesteaders with a little stock. But there weren't many streams. Mostly it was a dry country, just rolling grassy prairie with a few scattered water holes that didn't run anywhere. Of the seven or eight hundred people in the county, most of them were just scratching out a bare living, except Duke. And they didn't even do that unless Duke was willing. He made the sheriff, the justice of the peace, and had a pretty fair drag with the district judge that came in on us twice a year. All in all it was just about Duke's county.

Everything he had a use for just natu-

rally belonged to him, and the only things he left to other people were the things he didn't want. And he didn't always bother to take title to things he did want. He just let it be known he considered them his, and took what he wanted—water holes, stray stock, timber off the hills. Nobody could ever prove that he had ever done violence to anybody, or actually stolen anything. But if a nester started in to homestead a piece of land Duke was grazing, accidents could happen, you know. And in those days none of us could go far unless we did things for each other.

If Duke wanted a man out of the country, somehow the poor chap would find that nobody would do anything for him at all. Nobody knew where his stock had strayed to, nobody would close his gates, nobody would mend a hole in his fence, nor lend him a wagon, nor help him dig a cistern, nor bring stuff out to him from town. And that meant ruin.

One or two men got ambitious enough to try to get out of the nester class and turn their stock out on the open range; but it didn't get 'em anywhere, because sooner or later it meant a row with some of Duke's punchers, and either they got shot in an argument or shot the other fellow, and when court came along there wasn't much that could be done for 'em. Duke was always sorry about shooting scrapes, but as he said, he wasn't responsible for his punchers, and punchers were a bad lot anyway. And along with that he could prove his man was in the right of the argument.

He got mixed in some gunplay once or twice himself, but there was never any evidence to show that he started it. On the whole, it didn't make much difference, for the sort of folks that didn't like Duke got out, and the sort that was left wouldn't have amounted to much anyway, Duke or no Duke.

All but Thorpe and Warren Osborne. I remember the time I first saw them. It was up at Horse Creek Spring, a water hole out south of town about four miles. There's a sort of sink, or hollow, in the prairie there, clear down through the lava rock that underlies all that country. It's a gully some fifty feet across, and the lava stands up like a broken cliff three-quarters of the way around, ten or twenty feet high. The water seeps out from under the rock, and in one place there's quite a trickle. It runs down into the center of the gully where there's a little pool, two or three cottonwoods, some scraggly wild plum bushes, and then for a ways there's a little stream. But it goes into the ground in a hundred feet or so, and just about there the gully widens out into a big draw that keeps getting wider and wider till it's just a big swale in the prairie. Four or five miles down the water comes to the surface again and runs along for another piece.

Tom Hardgrove had a hay ranch down there. But nobody had ever done anything with the spring. We were no great hands to improve on what nature did for us, and there was hardly enough water there to be of any particular use except as just a water hole. The important thing about it was that it never went dry. Duke ranged his cattle mostly north of town, but dry seasons he sometimes turned 'em south, and Horse Creek Spring was one of the water holes he depended on. Neither he nor anybody else had ever taken the trouble to get title to it. It was just part of the open range.

I ran into the Osborne boys there one spring day when I was riding up the swale from Hardgrove's toward Carmelita. I was working for the Lazy Y outfit that year. They ranged mostly about twenty miles south. It was getting on toward spring roundup time and they'd sent for me to get some sort of notion on how far north their cattle might be running. I'd had a long morning ride and figured on resting up for an hour or two under the cottonwoods there, the way most of us did. And there were those two strangers sitting there smoking, their horses turned loose to graze. Fine, rangy lads they were, as like as two peas, somewhere about twenty-five, black haired, square jawed, sharp nosed, and clean

built all over. And sort of solemn owls. You could see that right away. By that I mean that their faces didn't tell you anything about what they thought or felt. Those black eyes would be getting you sized up right away, but you couldn't size them up at all. It was right disagreeable. And you'd likely feel the disagreeableness of it without knowing just why it was.

"Howdy, boys," said I.

"Howdy," said they, and I stopped, got off my horse and got a drink at the spring.

"Nice water," said one of them.

"Yes," I said. "It is that."

"Whose is it?" asked the other one.

"Well, it don't actually belong to anybody. I guess Duke Spangler has as much claim on it as anybody."

"Who's he?" asked the first one again.

"He's got the only real cow outfit around here," I said. "Ranch-house about ten miles north."

I SAT there under the trees with them and passed the time of day for quite a spell. We didn't talk about anything in particular, but it struck me all at once that without asking any direct questions those two were finding out a lot. I never was much of a hand to talk, either, and as for questions, too much curiosity didn't go on the range in those days. But I found that without their asking me I'd told them pretty well all about the country around Carmelita, and I didn't know any more about them than what I could see, and I was studying them hard. They were nice to look at, too. Nothing fancy about them, but they wore pretty fine hats, and shirts and neckerchiefs a little better than the average puncher has, and some real boots. Saddles were the same way; nothing gay or sporty, but fine leather and well looked after. Both of 'em packed two guns. That was a little bit out of the ordinary, but nothing strange, for everybody in those days packed one, and two only meant that a man liked shooting rather than that he was a bad man.

While we were talking somebody hailed us from the edge of the rock above us, and there was Duke Spangler. He turned his horse loose and came on down. He didn't pay any attention to the other two at first, but just asked me how much of his stock I'd seen on my way up from the Lazy Y, but I could see he was eyeing them all the while. Somehow they seemed to bother him.

Finally he said:

"If you boys are looking for work, I don't believe you'll find any around here. I've got all the men I need."

"Ain't anybody else around here, I suppose?" said one of them with a grin.

"Well, not so you'd notice it," said Duke.

They didn't say anything to that at all.

"You might find something over Clayton way," said Duke.

"I don't know as we are exactly looking for work right now," said the fellow again.

"Well, what are you doing?" asked Duke.

That was the sort of question that wasn't asked in those days. But the fellow took it all right.

"Well, right now, stranger, we're sitting in the shade resting. After that, just sort of drifting around, to see what we can see. Is that all right with you?"

Duke had that coming to him, but it riled him just the same.

"I don't know whether it is or not," he said. "I aim to know pretty well who's doing the drifting around these parts, what with rustlers and tin horns and one thing and another."

"Yes," said the other, "I've heard there have been a good many of them around this part of the country. As likely as not you don't want it overcrowded."

"Why, you—"

Duke started to say something but right in the middle of it there was a big bang, and the chap that hadn't been doing any of the talking was shoving a gun back into its holster. I hadn't seen him draw it, either.

"Snake," he said, and went over and picked up a big rattler out of a hole in the rocks. Its head was shot clean off.

"Shooting snakes is one of the things I like better than almost anything in the world."

He dropped that sort of casual-like, and looked at the snake and laughed. Nobody could have said he meant anything but just what the words said, and yet one couldn't help wondering. There weren't many men that ever talked that way around Duke Spangler, and I sure was beginning to enjoy myself.

"You're some shooter," said Duke.

"Oh, just sort of. Down in Texas, now . . ."

Duke's eyebrows went up. It was the first word he'd got from them that gave him any line on them at all. They did say that Duke used to live in Texas, too.

"You from Texas?" he asked.

"Maybe."

"Rangers, maybe?"

I hadn't thought of that. It was only about twenty miles to the Texas line.

"Maybe," was all the fellow said, though.

Well, Duke just looked them up and down, and they watched him do it, their eyes sort of twinkling. The one who had shot the snake took out his gun again while Duke was looking him over, cleaned it, put in another shell and put it away again.

"Well, Warren," he said to the other one, "let's drift along."

So they got their horses and mounted.

"Say, mister," said the one called Warren, just before they started off, "speaking of rustlers and Texas and tin horns and Rangers and such, if you know of a Duke Spangler or a Mort Bradley in these parts, tell 'em we were told to tell 'em things were just the same. So long."

"Damn," said Duke, and looked at me as if he wished I wasn't there.

Then he called after them to wait but they didn't hear, and he seemed to think he'd let the whole thing go without asking any more about it. It was clear enough they didn't know who he was from the way they spoke. Or did they? Mort Bradley was Duke's top hand and a bad egg—tin horn and rustler both, according to rumor, and generally a pretty tough customer, but a mighty capable puncher, at that. Most of the accidents and meanness and some of the shooting scrapes around Carmelita got charged up to Bradley.

WELL, that was that. I sort of liked those two fellows. But Duke was riled clear through, the way he always was whenever he met anybody that wasn't the knuckle under kind. Just what they meant by their last remark I never knew —whether it was a real message, or a threat, or what. But it worked out sort of queer, because about two weeks later Mort dropped out of sight. And nobody could get any track of him until about a month later we heard they had him in jail at Amarillo for a shooting scrape he'd been in down there three or four years back. It seems he happened across the line and the Rangers got him. Or maybe they happened across and got him on the quiet. They did that sometimes, and that was the way Duke figured it; and he put the blame on those two at Horse Creek Spring.

We ran into them again at the same place along early in June. Duke and I had come along together, going in from the range to Carmelita. There was a covered wagon unhitched just above the spring, and Duke rode up to see who might be traveling through; and there were our two down by the water, and Tom Hardgrove, and Henry Grueber, a couple of nesters with 'em. They'd got some boards and some cement sacks, and they seemed to be figuring on some sort of a dam across the creek.

"What the hell do you all think you're doing with my water hole?" shouted Duke.

Warren Osborne looked up with a pleasant smile.

"Why, is it yours, mister? We didn't know that. They told us at the land office it wasn't anybody's, so we filed on it, and they gave us a paper that says it's

ours, now. Of course, if it's really yours, we'll get off. You might look over the paper they gave us."

It read "to Warren Osborne". And there was another one made out to Thorpe Osborne. That was the way we got their names. They'd filed on a quarter section each, including the spring and a good chunk of the swale below. Duke didn't say anything at all for two or three minutes—just held the papers and stared at them. Then he passed them back to Warren Osborne.

"I s'pose you figure you'll get me this trip," he said, "seeing you got Mort Bradley last time."

"How's that?" said Osborne.

"I s'pose it's news to you that Mort's in jail down at Amarillo."

"It sure is."

"You don't know a thing about it?"

"Not a thing. All we know about Mort Bradley is what we told you we were to tell Bradley and Spangler. We didn't even know you were Spangler, then."

"But you do now?"

"Yes, we do now."

"When you know me better you'll know enough not to try any shenanigan on me. In the first place, I'm not wanted down in Texas, even if Mort was. Just remember that."

"Well, we reckon that's just none of our business. We were told to deliver that message, and we did."

"Who told you to deliver it?"

"He said you'd know. Chap at the stockyards at Amarillo—we didn't get his name—just a favor to a stranger."

"I see," said Duke. "I s'pose, too, that's why you're filing on my spring. Let me tell you something. Of course you've got a right to do what you want to. But we don't care much for homesteaders and crop ranchers around here. The open range is small enough as it is, and what few water holes there are we need. And we don't care for Texas spies and gunmen either. You boys are starting in to make yourselves mighty popular."

"I reckon it won't turn our heads," said Warren. "I haven't heard that you are over popular yourself. As for spoiling the range and all that, there are some fools, you know, who say you've hogged all of it yourself, and that if somebody could come in here and take some of it away from you, they'd be glad of it. I'm not listening much to them or you either. There's the water, and the land around it. We want it. It doesn't belong to you, or anybody else. You've had plenty of time and ways to get hold of it if you chose to. You never did. And now we've filed on it. I don't see what kick you have coming."

"Maybe you will later," said Duke.

"That's just as you choose, Spangler. But if you think this country isn't big enough for both of us, don't fool yourself into thinking all you've got to do is to invite us to move on. And when you do your kicking, be careful not to hurt your foot. Meantime, you're on my property. If you're right pleasant, we'd be glad to have you stay. But if you're going to keep on being disagreeable, you might move on."

Nobody had ever talked to Duke just like that before, and I was surprised to see him take it. But there didn't seem much else for him to do. His usual way was to say something to get the other fellow mad enough to start to pull a gun, and then Duke had him, for Duke was pretty quick on the draw. Things didn't usually go as far as actual shooting, but Duke had things his way. This time, though, it was Duke that was riled. Osborne had kept one jump ahead of him all the way through.

There was something about Warren Osborne, too, that made a man hesitate about using really offensive language to him. I don't mean in the way of being afraid of him—not that, you sort of put yourself out of class by doing it. As for pulling a gun on him, it didn't seem worth trying. He might beat you to it. Besides, there was Thorpe.

The brothers Osborne were a team that looked plenty capable of giving anybody all they wanted of trouble.

THINGS drifted along. Hardgrove and Grueber had heard the whole thing, and that had its effect. The story got spread around and Spangler found it wasn't so easy as it had been to get his way about everything. He'd have to haggle a bit about the price of hay or horses or work—just a little bit, enough to be disagreeable—and things he wanted done his way sometimes got done some other way, or not done at all. Nesters began to be a little mite independent. Still, when it came to a showdown, he was boss. Of course, the Osborne boys put in their reservoir, blasted out under the trap rock and got a good flow of water; built a stone house a ways below the spring and piped water to it. They broke up about forty acres, put it in fall wheat, broke up some more, and started some alfalfa.

You can do a lot with an inch of water when it flows steady. Duke sneered at the whole business, even in front of the Osbornes. They took it all good naturedly, said they didn't expect to make anything the first year or two, even if they ever made anything at all, but that they preferred gambling with wheat to gambling with poker chips; that it would be their own money they lost, and whatever they won wouldn't come out of anybody else's pockets. That was a bit hard on Duke, for when he played poker he hardly ever lost, and nearly everybody around Carmelita had been hard hit, one time or another, from playing with him.

Things happened, of course. Some stock broke down the Osborne's fence and got into the wheat. It was queer about that, too—it was Hardgrove's stock, and for the most part Hardgrove's bunch ranged three or four miles off. And Hardgrove had been right friendly to the Osbornes. Duke happened along about the time Warren Osborne was driving the stock out, and he asked Warren how he supposed it happened. Warren told him the fence had been cut. It wasn't more than an hour before Hardgrove rode up with Duke, wanting to know what Warren meant by saying he had cut the fence.

"Why, Hardgrove," said Warren, "I didn't say you did it."

"Well, what did you say?"

"I said the fence had been cut," said Warren, and he looked Duke square between the eyes.

"Who do you think cut it?" went on Hardgrove.

"I didn't say. What I think isn't worth much. I don't think you did it. You wouldn't ride off at night and drive your stock off a good range into my wheat just to make me sore. And this stock was driven."

"How do you know that?" said Duke.

"Well, if you really stand in need of the information, there are the tracks of two horses right by the cut wire, and of two men, too, and two cigaret butts, and Hardgrove doesn't smoke. And I know how one of the horses was shod. And there are other signs. Whoever did it, did some pretty coarse work, especially in trying to lay it on to Hardgrove. Maybe he had a grudge against Hardgrove as well as me. We're both crop ranchers."

Nobody ever heard the Osbornes refer to that again, and Hardgrove only told it just as I've told it to you. Duke never talked about it either; and it wasn't just his way, because up to then he did quite a lot of talking about any bad luck that came to the Osbornes.

Of course, there was talk that the Osbornes were rustling. The usual talk—you know the sort—nobody knows just where it started, nobody knows anything definite, but all the same, more than one all square, honest man has been run out of the cattle country by that line of talk. And Duke sure knew how to start it. It worked to the extent that men stopped talking and drew away when the Osbornes came to town. Not all of them, of course. Hardgrove and Grueber, and one or two others seemed really fond of 'em. It didn't bother the Osbornes much to be left alone, though. They didn't come to town often, and when they did, they looked after their business and went on home.

"Of course they would," was what Duke said about it. "Anybody as un-

popular as they are would hardly care to stick around with the boys."

Grueber happened to hear that. He was a little, wizened up shrimp, with a face so wrinkled it was comic, about as full of fight as a field mouse. But he did a funny thing right then.

"Seeing as you say that before me, as a friend of theirs, Duke, and that you don't do any talking with 'em yourself, is it that you're sort of thinking I might tell 'em what you say?"

"Tell 'em anything you like," snapped Duke. "Tell 'em I said they were rustlers, Rangers, hoboes. It's probably all true, and nobody around here cares whether it is or not."

That was in Mex Pete's place, where Duke was sitting in at a game. The boys gave Grueber the usual laugh, and he took it just as he always did—not even riled, you know. But he seemed to be sort of puzzling about things, and when somebody happened to think about him again, he was gone.

"Reckon he's gone to tell 'em, Duke," laughed somebody.

"I hope he has," said Duke. "Not that they don't know it already. They're good bluffers. But you can tell what a man really is by how much he'll take. And they'll take it, all right. You'll see."

ABOUT an hour later we heard horses coming along the road at a lazy lope, and then the Osborne boys came in. No, not het up, nor in any hurry, just sort of sauntering. They had a drink apiece, then started playing pool. They played and played, not paying any attention to anybody until some of the boys began to look on, and then they were as polite as you please. They didn't try to make any of the conversation, but they talked as they were spoken to; when they were just spoken at, ugly, hinting sort of things, somehow or other they seemed not to hear.

They sure could play pool, too. They played till we began to wonder if Henry had told them at all, or if they were going to do anything about it. Under the surface things were a bit tense, of course, but as time went on, they sort of eased down, and we got so interested in the game we sort of forgot we were supposed to hate 'em—which didn't suit Duke at all, though all he could do was to sit off by himself and pretend to read a newspaper.

By and by, and all at once, Warren put his cue in the rack and wheeled around on us right sudden.

"Men," he said, "Henry Grueber told me Duke Spangler said we'd naturally stay away from town because we knew we were unpopular. We've been here about an hour now, and we've had a right good time. If there is anybody who isn't satisfied about that, we'd be glad to hear from him."

A thing like that, straight out and all at once, without any leading up to, or working around to, sort of took our breath away. It's an honest way of doing things, too, like the way a good dog growls at the man that has done him dirt. Nobody said anything.

"Spangler," Osborne went on, "Grueber also told me that you told him he could tell us that you said we were rustlers, Rangers, hoboes. Is that true?"

"Well, it's common talk," drawled Duke.

"Yes, I know it's common talk; known it for some time. I think I know, too, how it happens to be common talk. But you're the first man that has said anything of the sort publicly, in a way I could pin down. Are you prepared to prove any of those statements?"

"I don't know as I have to. I've a right to my opinions."

"You certainly have. But open talk in public is different. You have to prove anything you say about the Osbornes."

"Reckon if I took the trouble it wouldn't take me long to get the information. Reckon I could find a running iron around your place right now."

"You mean you could manufacture some evidence. No, you couldn't find a

running iron around our place—not right now, because we brought it in with us. Get me that iron off my saddle, will you, Thorpe?

"Men," he went on, as Thorpe stepped out, "two of Spangler's men hid this thing in my tool house two days ago. They didn't think we saw them, but we did. We'd been expecting them. We knew what all this rustler talk was leading up to. We even fixed a nice place for them to hide something in, and they were fools enough to put it there. They expected to come there and find it, but they wouldn't have. Let's have it, Thorpe. See, men," he went on, taking the iron from his brother, "this thing has been freshly blacksmithed. There isn't a forge on my place. I'll leave it to you to find any man who has done any blacksmithing for me, or any one we ever bought any branding iron from."

Nobody spoke. There was quite a shifting of feet, and most of us took a squint at Thorpe. But he wasn't doing anything—just standing there by Warren, grinning, with his arms folded across his chest, both hands showing—empty.

"If a branding iron on my place is evidence against me, how about a ranch where there are irons for changing half the brands in the county, to say nothing of running irons? I know where this iron came from. It came from the Spangler ranch. I know who made it. The same party has made other irons, lots of 'em, pieces of circles, wedges, none of it the sort of stuff that is ever made for any honest purpose, things never found on any honest ranch. I've never seen 'em, but I know they're there, because I know something about men. I make that statement in public, Mr. Spangler, and I'm prepared to prove it."

Well, Duke just laughed—a sort of hollow laugh. While he was laughing, one of his men started for the door.

"I don't believe I'd go just yet, if I were you," said Thorpe, quietly.

"Who's going to stop me?"

"I don't know that anybody would. I just said my judgment would be that you'd better not. If you should get out to Duke's place before we do, somebody might say you'd got rid of the irons. That would look bad for you."

He was still grinning, and he hadn't moved a hand, either. And then, soft but sharp—

"Stick 'em up!" he said.

He went over to Hank and took Hank's gun off him—Hank had reached for it—and threw it behind the bar.

"Anybody else? No?"

He looked around, still grinning. He seemed to be having the time of his life.

"You're a liar," burst out Duke.

"Meaning," said Warren, "that you want to settle this thing by starting a row. That wouldn't prove anything. I can prove I'm not lying in better ways than using a gun. We can have the row later, if you insist. Just now I'm anxious to prove you a crook. I'm going to your ranch. Anybody can come along, or stay here as suits him best. Thorpe will ride behind."

Well, we went. It was just as he said. I don't know how he knew; he never told us. But there were crooked irons all over the place. You could have changed any brand in the county with those irons. And they weren't even hidden. How Duke got so careless with 'em I don't know. Still, I guess nobody ever went to his blacksmith shop except his own men.

Warren didn't talk about 'em at all.

"You can draw your own conclusions," he said, and rode off.

We didn't draw any, publicly. You can't jail a man for having a piece of iron around his place, no matter what shape it is. The whole business was getting so nasty, most of us didn't care to meddle with it. Duke had too many friends. Of course, he had all sorts of explanations, all lame, but good enough to start an argument over, and we knew how an argument just then would be likely to turn out. We expected trouble out at Osborne's, too, and it came three days later. Only not just what we looked for.

ALONG about three in the afternoon Duke and Tex Milligan came tearing into town with their horses in a lather. Tex, Duke's top hand after Bradley left, swung out of his saddle and helped Duke down and half carried him into Doc Wither's place. Everybody crowded in.

Duke was sitting on Doc's table—there wasn't any operating stand—with his right arm smashed just above the wrist.

"That damn' skunk shot me!" he gasped. "Tried to murder me. Fired from the rocks by the spring, as Tex and I were riding along the road. We weren't doing a thing."

"Not a thing," said Tex. "He just stepped out and whanged away."

"I'm swearing out a warrant, Doc," went on Duke, Doc being sheriff, too, that year. "Go get him, boys. Bring him in. Don't wait for him to start shooting. We'll see if any rank outsider can run this county. Bring him in."

"You won't have to, boys," came Warren Osborne's voice from the doorway. "We are perfectly willing to stand arrest for this business. Which one of us was it you wanted? We are both here."

"I didn't have time to see which one of you it was," gasped Duke. "You'd better arrest both of 'em, Doc."

"That's all right with us, but it's funny you didn't see which one of us it was, seeing we were both there. Just what is it you charge us with?"

"What difference does that make, seeing you're going to jail?"

"Matter of bond."

"Bond?"

"Yes. We're prepared to give bail. Brought enough along to do it with—thought maybe we might need it."

"You don't get any bail," said Spangler.

"Oh, yes, we do, unless you should happen to die in the next hour or two. Any amount you say, Doc, according to the charge."

Doc puzzled a moment.

"I guess, Spangler, that assault with intent to kill is about the stiffest charge I can make. That takes the stiffest bail, too."

Warren passed over a wad of bills.

"Take it out of that," he said, "and give me a receipt."

I don't know just what the bail money was, but it was plenty. And I don't know whether the whole business was legal or not; I guess none of us did. I know Doc didn't. He hesitated, looked at Spangler, and Spangler nodded. So he whipped off a sheaf of bills and handed the rest back to Warren.

Warren turned to go, and then thought better of it.

"Men," he said, turning about, "take notice that I haven't said one word about this affair, except that Thorpe and I were both there, which Spangler denies. My submitting to arrest isn't admitting anything. I did that to prevent a crowd from coming out to our place and beginning to shoot without trying to make an arrest. That's about what was on the cards, and it would have been a little hard on everybody, except Spangler, who, as he is now, naturally wouldn't have come along. There won't be anything of that kind necessary. I can be found whenever wanted.

"If not, of course it'll be because I've left the country. That was your idea in getting Doc to take the cash bond, wasn't it, Spangler? And if there should happen to be anything like that, you'd be pretty well satisfied, wouldn't you? Getting me out of the country is the main thing you want, after all. Of course, if I do that it would be perfectly legal to send a whole posse out after me. It isn't likely to happen, Duke. I'm not quite a fool."

He looked us all up and down, and his eyes were cold and shiny like bits of quartz under the moon.

"We're free to go, under the law, until wanted for trial, aren't we, Doc?"

Doc didn't know much about it. He said yes, and they went.

Things certainly broke loose then, everybody talking at once. Some were

for going after the Osbornes and shooting them up anyway, but there were others who had been thinking a lot since the branding iron business; most of us seemed to think the Osbornes would be ready for a shooting party.

"Curse 'em," said Duke. "They're always just one jump ahead." He put a lot of heat into saying that, but the real reason for that didn't come out till later. "Never mind; let 'em go. They'll probably jump bail anyway. If they don't, the trial will fix 'em. I can attend to that."

Court was coming along in two or three weeks anyway. And Duke was off to see the district attorney as soon as his arm would let him. He took Tex with him. The district attorney was pretty near Duke's man. There never was but one real party down our way, and a nomination was as good as an election. But they had a way of parceling out the offices to keep everybody satisfied, and for two or three years the district attorney fell to our end of the district; and Duke, as you might suppose, had had his own lawyer in training for the job for a year or more—about the only real lawyer there was thereabouts, too.

Condover, his name was, a clever chap, and likeable, too, and he'd made so good in finding out which side his bread was buttered on that he got re-elected. As I said, I don't know much about law, but that bird sure knew how to handle a witness, that is, an ordinary one, either for or against him, and get the testimony lined up the way he wanted it We didn't see how Warren Osborne was going to have much chance.

It was queer, though, the way Condover found his very first move blocked. He tried to find out where the Osbornes came from, and nobody knew. First he tried the bank, to find out where all that bail money came from. It seems Warren had telegraphed the bank at Amarillo for it, right after the branding iron business—one jump ahead as usual—but the Amarillo bank only knew he had a nice fat account there.

CONDOVER got the story in most of the newspapers all over the cow country, and had a lot of police heads looking over the records of all the gunmen they knew about, but he didn't uncover anything. The next thing was Spangler's own story. He and Tex told it just as they did before, only with a little bit more detail. They'd just been riding along the road above the spring, and Warren was down there doing something with the piping and looked up at them, and whanged away. Seeing that he had the drop on them, they didn't shoot back, but came right on to town, to get Duke fixed up.

Just as simple as that, straight as a string, only it was a little bit different from the way they first told it, and somehow or other, knowing the two men, it didn't set just right—especially the part about their not shooting back. Another thing, Duke hadn't packed a gun since he got hurt. And he could shoot pretty well with his left hand, too. Tex had a new gun—said the old one was pitted. He always kept the barrel of his gun looking like a mirror. There wasn't any talk about these things, but some of us noticed. It's funny how things get around without any talk about 'em.

Well, the trial came along, and I guess the whole county was there. Warren had a lawyer from Denver—seemed to be right chummy with him, too—a yellow haired, smiling, pleasant sort of a cuss, that didn't seem to know how to talk much, nor which side of the case he was really on. He was mighty nice to Condover, and Doc, and everybody, said of course he had to do the best he could for his client, and that it looked as if it might be an interesting case. That was about all.

Condover went at things his usual way, mighty particular about choosing a jury, got out of everybody any possible acquaintance he had with the Osbornes, and did a lot of challenging—pretty sharp with his questions, proved right smack off that nobody on the jury was going to put anything over on him; and in his opening

talk made out Warren Osborne a regular deep plotting murderer who just barely missed his mark. He drew quite an exciting picture of a couple of innocent men riding quietly along the road and being shot at from ambush, almost. 'Twasn't hardly necessary, seeing that on the whole the most of the crowd agreed with him, so far as the main point went.

Some of the jurors he challenged, and one or two of those he passed seemed to be a little mite sore at the way he quizzed 'em.

The Denver chap, Joyce, didn't seem much interested—sort of careless like. About all he asked the jurors was whether they had ever worked for Duke Spangler, and whether that would influence their opinion; and he managed to get in a question or two as to what they knew about guns and shooting before Condover noticed and objected. Then he apologized, said when he got to talking with men he sometimes got so interested that he forgot he was in court, and drifted into a general conversation. All he said in his opening talk was that he intended to prove his client not guilty as charged.

Duke and Tex told their story, and he didn't cross examine them even. He did ask Tex if he understood the nature of an oath, and the penalty for false evidence, and Tex said he did, but got kind of nervous and red, as I guess most anybody would at a question like that in front of a crowd. Then he took a notebook out of his pocket and ruffled the pages over a bit, and said, soft as a purring cat—

"I don't suppose you've ever testified in court before, have you?"

Tex looked at his boots. He didn't go red, he went white, and he opened his mouth to speak, but didn't say anything. Condover ripped out an objection.

"Oh," said Joyce, "if the question embarrasses the witness, let it go. I won't insist."

That was all the evidence there was. Condover was expecting, just as we all did, that Joyce would put the Osbornes on the stand to deny it. And I suppose he was ready for 'em.

But Joyce didn't do it—a funny lawyer.

"Your Honor," he said, "in this case nobody was present except the parties involved. We could put the Osbornes on the stand to refute the testimony given; that would be putting one man's word against another's, and we denied the truth of this evidence when my client pleaded not guilty. Of course if the Osbornes testified, the jury could draw their own conclusions, but it wouldn't prove anything. What we are after here is real proof. If I could introduce proof here, not by word of mouth, but in a way that men could see, even though in an unusual way, would the court permit it?"

"The court would, provided the way wasn't too unusual," snapped the judge. "Explain yourself."

I reckon that was what he had been playing for all along. He didn't talk to the judge, he talked to all of us.

"May it please the court," he began, "my client stands charged with assault with intent to kill. We admit the assault, under such circumstances as shall appear. We deny the intent to kill. We can prove that if Warren Osborne had intended to kill Duke Spangler, he would have killed him; and consequently, if he didn't kill him, he didn't intend to; that if he only wounded him, that was all he intended to do. What I am asking, Judge, is this: that my client, properly guarded and watched, be given a gun, either in the court room or outside, as the court may direct, with which he shall be permitted to shoot as many shots as you, or the jury, or the plaintiff shall direct, at the life size figure of a man on horseback, at the distance set forth in the testimony given, and under conditions as nearly as possible the same; the prosecuting attorney, the judge, or any member of the jury having the privilege of naming the part of the figure at which the accused shall shoot, the jury to determine from the accuracy of the shooting as to whether in shooting Duke Spangler through the arm, Warren Osborne failed to kill him because his aim was poor, or whether it was because he did not intend to. Is that fair?"

WELL, sir, there was a gasp of breath all over that courtroom. You could have heard a pin drop while old Judge Boyd sat there, ruminating. Then there was murmuring, not angry, but interested, excited. You know what any kind of a shooting match means to a bunch of cowmen. That's where Joyce showed his cleverness. He'd managed to get a bunch of men on the jury who liked guns—those casual conversations he had in examining the jurors meant something. It was the same way with Judge Boyd. I don't suppose he ever saw a gun fight in his life. But he was one of the best target shots anywhere in the Southwest. He just sat there looking out of the window with a glitter in those pale blue eyes of his, not seeing anything at all, his mouth twitching, while Condover fumed with objections. He was so mad he forgot that Joyce had suggested something we would all like to see, and we all felt as if he was trying to take our fun away from us. I don't think Judge Boyd even heard him.

Of course, Joyce had a lot of cases to cite in proof that the thing was legally right. I don't know where he got them, but he was sure loaded. And he certainly could talk when he got going. He just cut circles around every argument Condover could make, and the case simmered down into a popularity contest between those two, with Joyce as the friend of us all, pleasantly asking the judge to let us see a shooting match we all wanted to see, and Condover trying to prevent it.

"I don't know," said Judge Boyd finally. "It looks a little bit irregular. But we are here to do justice, not to follow fixed precedents. It can't do any harm, it will at least give us all a little fresh air, and unless the jury objects, I'll admit the evidence."

Somebody cried, "Hooray!" and Judge Boyd only smiled at him, the way a mother smiles at a cutting up kid, and then everybody yelled. Joyce had his dummy all ready, too, and the first thing we knew he had the stage all set out on the prairie, with the crowd making a half circle and Warren sitting on the ground in the middle of it, the dummy fixed up on a pony on the open side, with Tex to lead him, according to the speed he had testified to. There were two or three of Duke's kind of deputies armed with rifles, to see that Warren didn't get away. Joyce asked Duke if he wanted to make any changes, and said he was perfectly willing to adjourn to the spring, if anybody wished, but Duke was just grouching, and said one way of doing all this foolishness would suit him as well as another.

They gave Warren a six-gun, and Joyce told Tex to start his horse, and the jury to call their shots. The foreman called for a heart shot, and Warren put a hole through the dummy's left breast. The next called for an eye, and Warren said, "Which one?" and then called "Right! Left!" shooting as he spoke, and pushing in both the painted optics in that order.

I s'pose that really settled it, but the crowd was too interested to let the show stop. Warren shot a hole through each of the dummy's ears, and put a bullet through its neck, just as called. Then, the six-gun being empty, Joyce said he'd like to make a few changes. So he rigged a gun in the dummy's hands, and got the arm into shooting position, telling Warren to look the other way. Then he called the judge and Condover and the jury over close to Warren, and began pointing and whispering, and then he told Warren all right, and Warren whirled and let drive. He hit the gun all right, but he got the dummy through the wrist, too.

"Couldn't be done any other way," one of the jury said, and went over to pick up the gun.

"Gosh!" he said.

"Why gosh?" asked Doc.

"Nothing, only that's Duke's gun—the one he hasn't been wearing."

"Where'd Joyce get it, then?"

"I got it from Warren Osborne," said Joyce. "Here's another one I got from him you might like to look at."

It was pretty badly busted, the cylinder knocked out, but we all knew the gun. It belonged to Tex.

"Gentlemen," said Joyce, "that's my case. Suppose we go back to the courtroom and let Condover finish."

"So far as Osborne is concerned," said the jury foreman, "the case is finished right now. Not guilty! The case isn't finished, so far as Spangler and Tex are concerned, but I reckon it can be finished right here, too, without no courtroom, nor jury, nor nothing."

"Amen!" yelled somebody; and, "Sure thing!" yelled another; and the crowd began to mill around.

"Just a minute," said Warren. "I've got five shots left in this gun. And I'm here to say that this is a lawsuit, and not a mob. If anybody doubts that I can hit a live man as well as I can a dummy, just let him make a move toward Spangler or Tex. I'm not bringing any charge against them. Why should you? Mr. Spangler, get on your horse! That's it! You're free to go. Nobody has any warrant out against you. The rest of you men stay where you are. That's fine. And now, your Honor, Mr. Sheriff, Mr. Condover, we bid you good day. Come on, Thorpe, let's go home."

And off they rode, just jogging along. The other two went a bit faster. And nobody followed either pair.

That sure left us pretty well up in the air. There were some hotheads who wanted to go after Spangler; I suppose, too, there were some that would have liked to go after the Osbornes if they had dared. It was Joyce that saved the day.

"Suppose we go back into the courtroom," he said with that baby smile of his, "and I'll tell you what really happened, the way Warren told it to me."

So we herded ourselves in.

"In the first place," said Joyce, "it wasn't Warren that did the shooting at all. It was Thorpe. They put it on to Warren because they knew everybody knew what a shot Thorpe was, and they were afraid I might prove he would hit what he shot at. They didn't know Warren could shoot at all. Somebody busted the water pipes there at the spring the night before, and Warren guessed it was a plan to get him while he was working at them. So Thorpe hid in the rocks while Warren worked. Spangler and Tex came riding up quietly, but Thorpe spotted them. They both had their guns out. He shot Duke's out of his hand just as he was going to pull down on Warren, and did the same to Tex before he could bring it up. If they had had sense enough to bring a charge of assault with a deadly weapon they might have had some case. But they jumped too far. Of course, I could have put those guns in evidence, and asked them how Warren got hold of them, but it was easier this way. Maybe it was irregular. But I think it was convincing. The next move is up to Spangler."

"And he'll sure move," said Hardgrove, "if we've got anything to say about who is wanted in this county."

KEEPERS *of the* LIGHT

By

ARTHUR WOODWARD

OLD BILL RICKS told me this; Bill Ricks, the Americanized Englishman, forty years in Uncle Sam's Lighthouse Service save for an occasional year off; '98 for example, when he was smitten with the gold fever and packed into Alaska. Bill's legs are bowed like those of a salty buckaroo who was born on a horse, only Bill never rode such an animal. He says he got those bowlegs toting heavy packs over Chilkoot Pass. Says the weight on his back sprung his legs and he never could get them back in shape. Maybe so; all I know is that he claims this is a fact, but Bill always was a great one for claiming things.

He has served on nearly every one of the forty-two attended light stations extending from Point Loma in the South to St. George's Reef in the North—the entire length of the American Pacific Coast.

He knows those stations, does Bill. Santa Cruz was his favorite. He spent a few years in "So And So's Folly", that round, hollow steel peg of a prison known and cursed, by lighthouse men who have the misfortune to be assigned to it, as Mile Rock Light, standing forlornly isolated in the tide rips of the Golden Gate off Land's End.

The story is that an Army officer who had never had to live in a lighthouse, designed Mile Rock Light in an idle moment when his spirits were at low ebb, and submitted the plans to the Department and they were accepted. And Lighthouse Service men, deeming themselves a part of the Naval Service, as it were, curse when the designer's name is mentioned—at least those who have served a hitch in the lonely steel cubicle—blaming the Army for their misfortune.

As John Berg, the loyal Finn said, after being there something like thirteen years—

"It wass a helluva place to spend a vacation."

But Bill Ricks spoke of other lights too. New Dungeness for example, standing on a lonely point on the northern shore of the State of Washington, its long beam shooting out over the waters of Juan de Fuca Straits. That light has a history. It was built in 1856 when the Indians of the region were still a bit playful. Their idea of a choice outdoor sport was to take their rifles and see who could knock out the most panes in the windows.

It was a tall tower, over a hundred odd feet high, but that fact did not deter the marksmen. They blazed away merrily ever so often until the sport became too monotonous for the keepers. So the Government turned New Dungeness Light into a sort of arsenal. Iron shutters were fixed over the windows and a stand of rifles was kept at hand to repel besiegers. In time the Indians learned to leave the keepers alone.

And while we are in the neighborhood it would not be politic to overlook Bill's favorite story about Christmas at Patos Island Light, which station is located on a tiny speck of an island known as Patos Island, situated some twelve miles from the nearest large body of land, which is Orcas Island, and twenty-seven miles from the mainland.

BILL and a partner whom we will call John Clark, were keepers of Patos Island Light in 1911. December rolled around and Christmas drew near. Being sentimentalists, both Ricks and Clark decided they could not let Christmas pass without a real celebration. They were batching it of course, but they figured that a turkey dinner with all the fixings, including a demijohn of whisky, would not be beyond their means.

Orcas Island was the nearest inhabited spot. The mainland was too far a pull for one man in the station dinghy. They flipped a coin to see who would go for the turkey and trimmings. Ricks won.

Ordinarily, aided by wind and tide, a man could make Orcas in two hours. Ricks was favored with both tide and breeze and landed about ten o'clock in the morning.

In the little settlement on Orcas he fell in with a fisherman friend, Jim Lucas. Lucas suggested a bit of pre-Christmas cheer. Bill was agreeable. There was cheer and more cheer. However Bill had sense enough to get his supplies loaded into his boat first before celebrating too much. Jim, being a lonely fisherman and a good scout, was invited to have Christmas dinner at the light. Turkey and fixings. Fine. Nothing would suit him better.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the two celebrants started for Patos Island. The sea was kicking up a bit. The wind had increased and the two happy sailors decided they would let the wind work for them. They hoisted a rag of a sail and steered a course for the light.

The wind proved a fast worker. Before either man fully realized what had happened the small boat had heeled far over and in another moment they were swimming for dear life. The fish in that vicinity feasted royally on turkey and trimmings.

Both men sobered quickly in the cold water and for three hours they strove to get the boat righted.

Everything loose in the little craft had gone by the board. Oars, sail, every thing was somewhere afloat in the waters of the Gulf.

The light on Patos blinked at them alluringly from the distance.

There was only one thing left for them to do. They lay down and began paddling with their hands. Ricks conceived the idea that one man might get over side at the stern and kick, thus acting somewhat as a stern wheeler. So, alternately kicking and paddling with their hands, they eventually drifted to the island about two in the morning.

Clark was worried when the men failed to make their appearance, but when he heard the feeble hail he went down to the landing stage and helped the two sad, and wetly sober convives ashore, greatly relieved to see them safe and kicking.

When he heard that all the Christmas cheer had gone to Davy Jones' Locker, he changed his mind about being glad and threatened to heave them both back into the sea.

"Fine sailors you are. A little likker and a little blow and you spill out like two old maids from a bathtub when they find a cockroach swimming in it. Why'n hell didn't you both drown? No turkey, no whisky, no Christmas."

Christmas day dawned bleak and fog wet on Patos Island.

Spuds and beans, canned horse and tea. Christmas cheer.

Clark went morosely down to the beach to see whether the skiff was damaged in any way. He stared at the boat for a long time, then yelled fit to rouse the dead.

Ricks and Lucas stumbled out into the fog, rubbing bleary, sleep rimmed eyes.

"Hurrah fer Christmas!" howled Clark. "Look here what I found wedged under the thwarts!"

He held aloft the wicker covered demijohn containing the whisky.

"Oh, hell!" groaned Ricks and Lucas in chorus. "To think of us paddlin' all last night in the cold and thinkin' that was at the bottom of the sea. We never was lucky."

Thus came Christmas to Patos Island Light.

BUSHIDO

A Complete Novel

By CHARLES GILSON

CHAPTER I

A KOREAN PROLOGUE

FEW OF the autobiographies of quite ordinary men—if they were written—would be without passages that must read less like fact than fiction. I lay no claim to be anything but an ordinary citizen of the United States, an engineer by profession, and a family man; but it so happens that I had an experience in early life that contained all the essential elements of melodrama. And in view of the circumstance that I owe my fate to that adventure, and being now sixty years of age, I have, perhaps, the right to be reminiscent.

Looking back upon the time when I was twenty-six—and that was in the year '95—I see that what happened in Korea was no more than a prologue to the romantic events to which I have referred.

The Chino-Japanese War had not long been concluded; the old "Hermit Kingdom" was being peaceably and systematically annexed by Japan, and the agents of the Czar were beginning to get busy. Wherever you went, from Chemulpo to Port Hamilton, you heard rumors of Russian spies.

I had had some experience of railway work on the Canadian Pacific; and I jumped at the chance of a job under the government of Japan. Then Japan was adopting Western civilization in much the same manner as a man might change his clothes to make himself respectable. The opportunity was just what I thought I wanted; and I set out from the States as full of confidence as a bantam cockerel, under the impression I was one day destined to become the Mikado's minister of transport, or something like that.

Though one had to put up with a good

The Story of the Magnificent Loyalty of a Knight of Old Nippon

many discomforts, it was interesting work laying the permanent way in Korea; and it was when I came down to Fusan, when our part of the job was finished, that I first met Lilian Stevenson.

In those days English girls did not as a rule travel about by themselves; and on that account alone she would have attracted no little attention. As it was, she had only to lift a little finger to get the lot of us: a couple of China merchants from Shanghai; a war correspondent who had wandered down from Manchuria; my honorable and noble friend, Sawayanagi Ishida (of whom I have more to tell); Major Yamada, the commandant of the garrison—and last, but not least, Jeffery L. Norton, of Richmond, Virginia, who thought himself the favored one, and who happens to be myself. I may be biased, and on that account my opinion not worth much, but I have some reason to know that that girl was one in a thousand.

Fusan was an out-of-the-way little place in those days—just a winding street of two storied houses, overtopped by rough hewn telegraph poles, few of which were vertical. It was tucked away among the hills upon the slopes of which were old Korean graves, "devil posts" and ginseng sheds. Every mountain peak in the district had its special message for the native necromancer: fertility, long life, rank and wealth; and each grave lay between two ridges, one on the "dragon side," the other on the "tiger side," that the grave luck might flow down into the valleys. Concerning which mystic properties of the neighborhood the Japanese knew nothing and cared less. They were out to colonize the place and were building everywhere. Upon the crowded waterfront, whence you could look out across the bay toward Kojedo Island, the white coated coolies and native merchants with

their quaint horsehair hats were jostled and elbowed out of the light by the superfluous population of Japan, that comprised an amazing number of children.

There was only one hotel, where personal comfort according to Western notions was at a discount; and there it was that Lilian stayed. And I went there, too, when I came down from Seoul.

I didn't want to make a fool of myself; yet the moment I set eyes on her in that little Japanese hotel lounge with its *kakemonos* and wickerwork chairs, I knew I was caught. She was the next thing to an heiress, or she wouldn't have been knocking about the world on her own; and as I hadn't two spare yen to rub together, I had sense enough to realize that it would be sheer presumption on my part to ask a girl like that to marry me.

But there she was. And I couldn't help it. And who's to blame me? She was tall, yet slimly built, with a wonderfully graceful figure. There was rich animation in both her expression and her voice. She had hair a rich chestnut in color, piled high above her forehead according to a bygone fashion, whilst blue eyes, with dark eyebrows and eyelashes, gave her an appearance that was strangely fascinating. Her high cheekbones suggested that there was as much of the Celt in her as the Saxon; and she herself informed me that her family had originally come from Ireland—forgive her for that!

In any case I had to wait more than a week for a boat to Nagasaki; and I suppose that was the cause of the trouble—for I thought it trouble then. Remember, I'm trying to tell this story just as things happened. Had I then suspected the truth, I might have bolted. I could have gone back to Seoul. As it was, I was just a candle in the wind. I'm not superstitious, but I feel that the whole of that business was preordained, fixed by destiny, and I thank my stars it was.

For Lilian and I weren't the only people concerned in this frameup of Providence, as it might be called. There were four others, one of whom I knew nothing about at the time. I had never even heard of the man. And it had nothing to do with coincidence that we all happened to be in Korea at one and the same time.

I HAD had a Japanese foreman working under me on the railroad, a man called Nashimura who had had charge of a gang of coolies on the section of the line between Mil-yang and In-dong. This Sakamaki Nashimura was by no means a prepossessing little person. I always think of him as a man with the heart of a poet and soul of a swindler. He was all teeth and self-assurance; and although he was a good worker I was never inclined to trust him. He used to go about the streets of Fusan wearing a derby hat and a kimono, grinning and sucking his teeth.

I came across him once or twice after I had returned to Japan, and I remember how surprised I was to find him a gentleman of independent means, with European clothes two sizes too big for him and a cheap sapphire ring. He would never tell me how he had made his money so quickly; and though I was dead sure he had never got it honestly, I eased my conscience with the reflection that it had nothing to do with me.

But it wouldn't do to judge Japan by men like Nashimura—a rice bred race of Orientals who had become meat fed and developed a taste for *crême de menthe.* Even then I was well enough acquainted with the country to know that the ordinary tourist could never see the real soul of the country in the cocksure little middle class people who went about with elastic sided boots and cheap Birmingham umbrellas, over-polite in their manners and not over-particular about the truth or such subtle distinctions as *meum et tuum.*

I had been lucky enough to make friends with a man like Sawayanagi Ishida; and it was he who showed me for the first time everything that was admirable in, at least, one section of the Japanese nation, who taught me to love the land for something more than its

picturesque scenery, its quaintness and novelty.

He never told me much about his own family, but I believe he had an uncle who was a marquis. Anyway, he was one of the old *samurai* class. He loved to speak of *bushido*, the spirit of the *bushi*, the mediaeval armored cavaliers who rode the Tokaido from Tokyo to Kyoto, the privilege of whose caste was to carry arms for the Mikado and die for the honor of Nippon.

Like Nashimura, Ishida was also a product of the new Japan. But there was a difference between them. The former was a man of the peasant class who had become a member of the self-created *bourgeoisie*, whereas the latter was a *samurai* whom a grave physical deformity had compelled to adopt a profession other than that of arms. As a railroad engineer, he was my boss even in those early days in Korea; and although he had got the appointment mainly through influence, he knew his work all right, and I was proud to serve under him.

The fact was, he was a hunchback—and that's a thing you seldom see in the East. Also, he had some kind of deformity in the legs which made him limp when he walked. He always carried a heavy bamboo walking stick upon which he would lean heavily; and I believe, in a way, that walking stick satisfied his sense of honor. Once he touched a spring in the handle, and with almost childish pride showed me one of the finest steel blades I have ever seen. Sharp as a razor and thin as a reed, it had a whip to it like a Spanish rapier and was finely damascened in gold from the point to the hilt.

Ishida had nothing much to recommend him in the way of personal looks; yet his was a face that compelled the attention of any one who was familiar with Japanese physiognomy. It was the thin, oval, refined face of the aristocrat; a waxlike complexion, drooping eyelids, and the high forehead of a thinker. As for his eyes, they were capable of more expression than those of any Oriental I ever knew. As a rule they conveyed nothing but ineffable sadness; though I have seen them literally blaze with fury when his whole frame was shaken by uncontrollable passion. Indeed, he was liable to these sudden fits, and I honestly believe they had something to do with a kind of nervous disease, possibly brought about by his inability to take sufficient exercise.

In Fusan he only met Lilian once; and I saw straightaway that he was in the same boat as myself. He regarded her as a goddess beheld from a distance, a foreign divinity in whom he was more inclined to believe than the deities of his own Shintoism. Indeed, he told me afterward that, evening after evening, he had gone away by himself, seeking solitude among the old Korean graves among the hills where he could look down upon the lights of Fusan and watch the moon come out of the sea, like a pale lantern shining in a great vault where lay the relics of something that had been very wonderful and splendid before even Nineveh was built.

I loved this man, and I'm not ashamed to say so. All these years I have remembered him for his pride and patriotism—the spirit of the *bushi*. Brooding in solitude, confiding in no one, dreaming always of the inaccessible, he appeals to me as a tragic and noble figure in whom was the true quality of heroism.

IN KOREA I had not yet learned to know the man, and I had certainly no time to think of him. I had no other thoughts but of Lilian; and I missed my boat to Nagasaki on purpose.

For I had received no little encouragement, though I had never been able to screw up enough pluck to speak to her. More than once I had seen a look in her eyes that made me believe I had a chance; and that was all I wanted. And then, of a sudden, whatever hope I may have had began to fade out of me, just as if I were a man standing upon the summit of a high hill at sunset.

I won't say that she began to give me

the cold shoulder or anything like that. She was gracious enough whenever we happened to meet, but she made a point of avoiding me, as far as that was possible in a place the size of Fusan.

For two or three days I went about by myself, the most miserable young man in the Far East. Indeed I was in a worse plight than Ishida, who had gone back to Japan; for, if the truth be told, I was vilely jealous, and had some cause to be.

I wouldn't have minded so much being cut out by a white man, but both the war correspondent and the China merchants had been packed about their business; and my rival was none other than a monkey faced little Japanese major who had as much as he could do to prevent himself from tripping over his sword.

I trust I have no more than my fair share of human vanity; but with a girl like Lilian I couldn't understand it at the time, and it hurt like fire. Had I not had the evidence of my own eyes I could never have believed it. For she whom I had thought the most modest and perfect creature in both hemispheres practised every artifice known to woman; she neglected no feminine device to entrap that bemedaled, grinning little Japanese soldier with a mustache like a dirty toothbrush and teeth as yellow as a rat's. To my utmost mortification she proved herself a past mistress in all the trickeries and wiles that have been know to her sex since Eve and Delilah.

Crushed and humiliated, I kept so much to myself that I never learned what was happening in the one eyed place at the time. No one told me that a notorious Russian spy, by name, Nikolai Yashvin, had recently been apprehended in the hills above Fusan in the act of making a plan of the harbor. This fellow, it seemed, had been tried by court martial and sentenced to two years in a fortress in Japan—as likely as not the old wooden castle at Nagoya. I'm sure of this, at any rate—if I had heard the news, it wouldn't have interested me in the least, since there was no ostensible reason why I should imagine that Nikolai Yashvin had anything to do with Lilian.

As for her, she held her ground all right when I faced her with reproaches. It wasn't in human nature for me to keep my feelings bottled up any longer. I adopted an attitude of injured innocence, and I know now I hurt her to the quick.

She could give me no plausible explanation, though for the first time since I had know her she spoke from her heart. She asked me to believe in her in spite of everything, implored me to think better of her than she might seem to deserve. Had I known the truth, that would have told me she loved me. But I didn't; and it must be remembered that I had all the pride of youth. When she refused to drop Major Yamada—well, I just flung away from her with something at the back of my throat that was like a great lump of iron. I was down in the depths, and the remorse I experienced was no less than my indignation.

There was but one cure for me, and I had enough sense to know what it was. I must get right away from her and never see her again, and time would do the rest. I had the better part of my life in which to forget.

And that afternoon a ship came in from Chifu, and I booked a passage on board. In Japan I went straight through to Tokyo where I again fell in with Ishida. In the way of youth, I had to confide in some one, and I pitched upon him. Nor did I realize there was something cruel in that, for Sawayanagi Ishida was himself as much in love with her as I and no more likely to forget her.

Anyway, that's all there is to those few weeks in Korea—just the sort of thing that happens every day, and in every quarter of the globe where there are men and women, be they white, black, yellow or brown. But, as I've hinted, it was a kind of prologue to what happened afterwards. For the world's a small place as no man knows better than he who has traveled much, who has had the whole course of his life changed by a sudden shift of the wind.

CHAPTER II

THE SINNER REPENTS

IT WAS about seven years after the Fusan episode that I stood at the top of a cutting at the end of the Sawachi Tunnel on the Kiushu railway that ran from Kagoshima to Moji at the entrance of the Inland Sea. It had been a pretty problem to calculate on a question of time and expense exactly where the tunnel should end and the cutting begin; and it was not without feelings of satisfaction that I looked down upon the permanent way from a height of nearly sixty feet, and thanked my stars that the work had been finished on the very eve of the war with Russia.

Nashimura had again been working under me. As I have said, I had run across him in Kyoto where I found him swaggering up and down Theater Street and cutting a dash with the *geishas*. He confessed to having got into debt, and didn't mind going back to his old job on the railroad for a few months. He was just the man I wanted because he was an excellent foreman of coolies and had experience in the work.

Nashimura himself now stood at the mouth of the tunnel, with five or six men who were employed clearing up, collecting tools and a few old fish plates that had been left on the road. I saw the foreman take two steps across the track, and then I heard a rumble—something not unlike an approaching shell of a howitzer—and a trolley with about ten men aboard shot out of the tunnel down the gradient, and caught Nashimura in the back.

With a sharp cry he threw up his arms and fell upon his face across the rails where he lay writhing a moment, and then remained quite still.

The coolies on the trolley had put on the brake, and in less than two minutes were crowded around the prone figure of the foreman. I set off running as fast as I could, found a place where I could climb down, elbowed my way through the coolies and went down upon a knee by the side of Nashimura.

The Japanese was still breathing, but his eyes were half closed. An effort to move him resulted in a yell of pain. I saw at a glance that it was all up with the little fellow; his back had been broken. And the nearest doctor was six miles away, at Nagasu.

Somehow or other we managed to lift him up and lay him upon his back on the trolley, which we had transferred to the other line. He continued to breathe, but with the greatest difficulty; and when he looked up at me, an almost imperceptible movement of the eyelashes suggested recognition. Had it not been for that, we might have believed him dead, when in obedience to my orders the coolies began to push the trolley up the steep gradient through the tunnel.

It was slow work in the darkness; but when at last we came out into the daylight again, I saw that Nashimura had not only moved his head but was making an effort to speak.

I told the coolies to bring the trolley to a standstill, and then bent down so that my ear was close to Nashimura's mouth.

"Soon I die," he whispered. "Condescend to observe last wishes of dying man. Please excuse me; but I can not move."

Throwing back his head, he closed his eyes and lay quite still for a moment.

When again he spoke, he gave me to understand that he had something of the greatest importance to confide in me. There was also something he wanted to give me. But he was not willing to speak in the presence of the coolies. What he had to say was not for the ears of common men.

The railroad at that place overlooked the blue water of Shimabara Bay across which could be seen the round summit of Unzen standing forth above the clouds, sulphurous smoke and steam issuing from the crater. It was about midday. The sea was dead calm; and there was not a breath of air.

Down by the shore there was a wooden hut that had evidently been erected by one of our gangs. We made a stretcher

out of the long bamboo poles upon which the coolies carry their provisions; and after a good deal of difficulty we got the injured man into the hut where we made him a bed of rushes and dried grass.

And there, suffering the greatest pain, and often breaking off in his narrative, he made full confession of his sins. He told me of the by no means creditable part he had played in a certain transaction that had taken place in Fusan at the time when I myself was there.

IT IS impossible to relate his story in his own words; for, though his sentences were broken and jerky, they were loaded with the honorific terms and expressions that are characteristic of the Japanese language.

In Fusan he had had a clandestine love affair with a Korean woman who lived in a fishing village on the south side of the bay. I had every reason to believe that, for I knew from experience that Nashimura was very prone to such promiscuous flirtations. Anyway, he was returning to the town late one night and had taken a short cut across the hills, when he saw the figure of a man creeping stealthily and swiftly among the graves and devil posts.

Though it may not be easy to believe, Sakamaki Nashimura was not without his virtues. He had the same kind of physical courage as a wild animal. He squatted close as a hare, with a dangerous looking knife between his teeth; and then his natural curiosity and proneness to suspicion prompted him to follow in pursuit.

There ensued a kind of game of hide-and-seek. The fugitive tried to escape round a spur that jutted out from the mountain into the sea; but Nashimura was too quick for him and ran his quarry to earth among some ginseng sheds upon a patch of cultivated land some distance from the town.

The little Japanese pounced upon his prey like a cat and with his knife still between his teeth, ju-jutsued the man upon his back where he lay pinned flat, unable to rise without risking a broken arm.

Peering into his victim's face, Nashimura observed to his astonishment that he was a white man. And forthwith he knew at once who his captive was. For that very morning he had heard of the escape from the garrison guardroom of Nikolai Yashvin, the Russian spy.

Nashimura, who saw profit in the business, was top dog, all right. Grinning, with his knife in his right hand, he struck a bargain that was as much to the advantage of the Russian as himself.

He described Yashvin as a good looking young man who showed not the least concern when his captor threatened to give him up to the military authorities. In fact he ridiculed the whole idea from the first, telling Nashimura that he would get nothing better out of that than a few miserable yen, whereas there was a chance of coming to a business arrangement that might prove highly profitable to them both.

I can imagine Nashimura sucking his teeth when the proposition was explained to him in a practical light. The Russian declared that he could put him in a way of a comfortable income for some years to come. With a plainspokenness that must have taken the wind out of the sails of the Japanese, Nashimura was asked how he would like an allowance paid regularly by Major Yamada.

Plying his captive with questions, Nashimura learnt a few surprising facts before the bargain was closed. For it had been none other than Major Yamada who had connived at, and even assisted, the spy's escape. Yashvin had been accorded a personal interview with the commandant at which no one else had been present and at which he had been granted his request of being allowed special food. This included a loaf of white bread from the table of the major himself, and that loaf contained the steel file with the help of which the Russian managed to get away.

Yashvin went on to explain that he had to get out of the country somehow. It

was impossible for him to attempt the journey back to Port Arthur without cash in his pockets. He had no change of clothes, and he couldn't go down into the town without being recognized and arrested on sight.

The arrangement they came to was that the Japanese was to smuggle him on to a Chinese junk, which would take him on board as a passenger for a few dollars. Nashimura had no reason to doubt the Russian's story. In a way the steel file that he had found upon the man proved the truth of it. But he was shrewd enough to ask for a written document. With that in his possession, he saw that he would have the whip hand of Yamada, whom he could blackmail to his heart's content for the rest of his life.

As the Japanese knew no Russian, and Yashvin was unable to write in Chinese characters, though he could speak the Japanese language fluently, his statement was written in English—in the big notebook in which Nashimura had been wont to take down my orders when he was working on the railroad. Yashvin, it may be added, showed discretion beyond his years when he refused to trust the Japanese with his signed confession, until he was safely on board the junk and knew that he had escaped.

Since then, Nashimura had lived by blackmail at the expense of Yamada, who was now a full blown colonel on the staff at the garrison town of Osuma, not far from Kyoto. That accounted for the sudden prosperity of my little Japanese foreman; but, if he had lived forgetful of the gods, he died repentant.

It may have been that the swift approach of certain death reminded him of his loyalty to Japan. Patriotism had overcome avarice. It had occurred to him that, if Yamada could prove a traitor in time of peace, he might even be capable of giving assistance to the enemy in time of war. Almost with his last breath, the dying man told me that he could never rest in his grave unless I undertook to deliver into the hands of Field Marshal Oyama in Tokyo the written statement of the Russian spy. Also, he made me swear that I would breathe no word of what he had told me to any living soul, until I had fulfilled my mission.

I promised faithfully that I would do this—after all a small thing and all for the glory of Japan. I took the document, which was contained within a sealed envelope, from the pocket of Nashimura's coat. And I promised him before he died that the seal would be broken by no one except the Commander-in-chief himself.

And then, with a deep sigh, half of suppressed pain and half of relief, little Nashimura breathed his last, just knocked out of his world of swindles and swagger and *geishas* by a scrap of rolling stock.

He was buried at the end of the tunnel he had helped to make, where it is to be hoped the Shinto god who was his foster-father guarded his spirit more sedulously than he had guided his erring footsteps through life.

AS FOR me, some three days later, I went north to the little port of Moji, upon the south side of the narrow, swirling waters that lie at the threshold of the Inland Sea.

It was evening when I got there, and across the straits in the darkness, I could see the lights of Shimonoseki on the main island. Past this Oriental Scylla and Charybdis is the calm lake of an Asiatic paradise: green islands in the sunlight, with the temple *torii* standing forth in water blue as sapphires, the sacred deer upon the island of Miyajima, and the terraced land with its ricefields, shrines and snow capped mountains, a pastel done in all the colors of the rainbow.

But then, as I waited among the crowd of sweating stevedores for the ferry to take me across, I realized it was War. All about me was activity and bustle, and I was conscious of a feeling of excitement.

There were lights everywhere. Along the opposite coast the lights of sampans hurled like shooting stars, swinging in semicircles across the flood. On the jetty

were bales and boxes of cargo to be transported to the other side, containing provisions for the troops in Manchuria, the contribution of the island of Kiushu to the sacred cause of the Mikado. There was as yet no sign of the ferryboat, which did not appear to have left the quay at Shimonoseki.

At that moment the figure of a Japanese who was wearing an overcoat with an astrakan collar appeared upon the jetty. I never for a moment suspected who he was. For the wind was so biting cold that I had made my way to the shelter of a pile of packing cases where, with such amazing rapidity that I had no time to cry out for help, a heavy bandage that might have been a towel was thrown over my head and drawn tight upon my mouth and nostrils.

Struggling, I recognized that I was held in powerful hands, whilst I felt the pressure of a bony knee in the small of my back.

In a critical moment many thoughts may pass through a man's brain almost simultaneously. I could see nothing; I had no idea who my assailants were. But at that moment I remembered the sealed envelope in my pocket. I realized, also, the astonishing audacity of those who had attacked me, who had made an attempt to kidnap or rob me on a crowded pier.

More with the idea of attracting attention than of effecting my escape, I used all my weight and strength in an effort to fling myself to the ground. And if I did not succeed in this, I accomplished something as useful; for I brought down a heavy tea chest from the top of a pile of boxes, and this smashing against an iron bollard, rebounded into the water with a splash.

And a moment later I was released as suddenly and unexpectedly as I had been seized. The bandage fell from my eyes, and I found myself confronted by Sawayanagi Ishida, whose bamboo stick had been converted into a sword, and who was literally foaming at the mouth like a mad dog.

In the light of a cresset that flared at the end of the pier no man could have looked more strangely terrible. All the mildness had gone out of his thin aesthetic face. He was livid with passion. His lips were contorted; his eyes ablaze. I learnt then, for the first time, that that man at such a moment was capable of anything.

It was with difficulty that he controlled himself. For a moment he stood, trembling violently. And then he forced a laugh.

"A good thing, I think, I arrived when I did," said he.

"I think so too, Ishida. You made short work of them. Where have they gone now?"

He shrugged his shoulders. With a sigh he replaced his sword in its bamboo sheath.

"Fled like rats," said he. "Too quick for me, I think. Ah, what would I not give to draw my sword, as a *samurai* should, in honorable defense of Nippon!"

I felt the inside pocket of my coat.

"Everything's all right," said I. "They've taken nothing. They had no time—thanks to you, my friend."

Ishida bowed.

"I pray you, condescend to think no more of it," said he. "Our honorable friendship does not depend upon such trifles."

Ishida, who had had charge of the work in Kiushu, had come up from Nagasaki and must have been on board the same train as myself, though I had not seen him.

"Had anything been stolen," he observed, "I would have been ashamed for my countrymen who can show such ingratitude to one who has done so much for Japan."

The ferryboat had now left Shimonoseki and was forging slowly upstream, that she might swing down with the tide.

"I wasn't frightened about the money," said I, "though I've got more on me than I'd care to lose. I've got to go straight through to Tokyo. I've got a letter on me that may lead to something. I've an idea those fellows may have been after that."

"Maybe," said he, turning up the collar of his astrakan coat. "It depends what the letter is."

"I can't tell you that," said I. "It's a kind of sacred trust."

"I am not curious," he told me. "I am only too delighted that we are to travel together, for I, too, am on my way to Yokohama. We must see that we get accommodation in the same car."

On the ferryboat I borrowed a needle and thread from the steward and ripped up the lining of my coat, inside of which I sewed the envelope. It would be safer there until I got to Tokyo.

Returning to the deck, I found Ishida leaning on the taffrail, gazing into the black night toward the open sea. Far to the west, somewhere beyond the Korean hills and the Yellow Sea, was Manchuria, an old land with an old language and a form of writing as ancient as the cuneiform of Babylon. And there within the next few months the fate of modern nations and the destiny of the Far East was to be decided. A youthful Oriental David faced the spurious Goliath whose shadow had been cast upon Europe for years.

CHAPTER III

THE CULVERT

THE WHARVES and the railway station at Shimonoseki were crowded. Scores of goods trains were sidetracked; cargo ships were moored together with the familiarity of native sampans. At the declaration of war this straggling town of a single street had awakened to find herself famous. She was no longer Shimonoseki. She was Railhead, the terminus of the main Tokaido Line, the nearest port to the scene of operations.

Ishida, making inquiries, discovered that the 7:10 P.M. Tokyo train had not yet started, though it was by then nearly ten o'clock. We had just time to buy some food before the train left on its long journey from one end of the main island to the other.

Whether or not a box of raw fish, wrapped in edible seaweed, proved too much for my friend's digestion, he showed no inclination to sleep, but sat talking for hours, smoking innumerable cigarets. And naturally he discussed the war. In those anxious days there was no other topic, from Nagasaki to Nikko. He felt his own deformity as if it were a scourge, the mark of a branding iron that had scarred his very soul. Had it not been for that, he would have been overseas with the army that was marching upon Port Arthur.

I slept restlessly that night, waking whenever the train stopped with a jerk. By eight o'clock in the morning I had washed and dressed, when we drew alongside the platform at Hiroshima.

Looking out of the window, I might almost have fancied myself within sound of the guns. For here the military element was predominant—boxes of small arm ammunition, stacked high as ramparts, guarded by sentries with bayonets fixed; close at hand the guns, limbers and wagons of a battery of field artillery, waiting to be entrained; bivouac fires on both sides of the railroad; and officials hurrying down the train, announcing that all passengers must keep their seats. No foreigner was to be admitted into what was one of the largest garrison towns in the country.

The sudden appearance of an immaculate and unruffled Briton in the midst of the uniformed, officious crowd took me by surprise. I could tell at a glance that the man was English. The well cut tweed suit, the turned up trousers, the monocle in his left eye, to say nothing of the amazing indifference with which he listened to the excited protests of a bemedaled officer of field rank.

Speaking quite passable Japanese, he declared that he had not the least objection to boarding the train. If, by visiting Hiroshima, he had offended the susceptibilities of the Japanese nation in general and the field officer in particular, his mistake had been unintentional.

As a railway porter, carrying two

leather grips plastered with labels and followed by a girl, made his appearance out of the waiting room, the monocled Britisher waved a hand at me.

"Cheerio!" he exclaimed. "There's only two things in the world I happen to want, a whisky and soda and a chance for speaking my own language."

"I'm from the States," I said. "All the same I'm pleased to meet you. You seem to have got into trouble."

"Trouble? By gad, no! How was I to know we weren't wanted in this dashed place? Jump in, Lilian," he cried, turning to the girl who had now come up to him, "or they'll rake up some excuse to lock us up in a guardroom."

At the name I turned—and the breath went clean out of me, as if I had been struck fair and square between the ribs. It was Lilian Stevenson, sure enough; and in these years, when she had lost nothing of the freshness of girlhood, and something of maturity had given her new and indefinable charms, she had become amazingly beautiful. Her lips parted quickly, as if for some unuttered exclamation. But she recovered almost at once and came toward me with an outstretched hand.

"How strange that we should meet again," she faltered.

"After all these years!" I said.

That wasn't exactly gallant, but I couldn't think of anything else to say. I might have been fifty instead of thirty-five, and she had been born in the same year as myself—under the same star I always like to think.

With a charming smile she introduced her brother, who screwed his monocle tighter into his eye and looked at me as if I were something in a glass case in a museum.

At the door of the car, which was crowded with native passengers, George Stevenson even more critically surveyed the occupants.

"Damn' rum lot!" he observed at the top of his voice.

I blushed, for Ishida's sake. He had risen from his seat and stood bowing, with his hands upon his knees, staring hard at Lilian as if he beheld a ghost.

He, too, remembered her. Nor had she the slightest hesitation in recollecting even what they had talked about the only time they had met, in the little Fusan hotel. And I saw from my friend's face that that touched him to the heart, the most wonderful compliment that he had ever been paid in his life. He couldn't have been more pleased had he been decorated with the Order of the Rising Sun by the Mikado himself.

It was a situation in some ways disconcerting. I couldn't help feeling that this chance meeting was going to revive memories that I had hoped were forgotten.

However, a little party of four, we settled down at one end of the car. I gave up my corner seat to Lilian and sat beside her, whilst George Stevenson and Ishida were opposite.

And at once I was sorry I had thus arranged matters; for Ishida seemed incapable of moving his drowsy, almond shaped eyes from the face of the girl in front of him. Indeed, leaning a little forward, he stared at her so hard that I myself felt awkward, though she remained outwardly unconcerned and especially charming to him.

AS FOR her brother, in spite of the annoyance to which he had been put in Hiroshima, he seemed in the highest spirits. He told me that he was a broker in Hong Kong, where he owned racing ponies—indeed, his chief interest in life seemed to be the turf—though I soon gathered from his conversation that he was by no means such a fool as he tried to appear.

But, whilst he and I were talking, I knew well enough that I had gone back seven years in my life. I made no attempt to resist. With mingled feelings I knew that those seven years were wasted.

I wasn't going to lose her again. I was resolved upon that. Remembering Yamada, I saw a potential, if not a very

formidable rival in my friend, Sawayanagi Ishida.

For the moment Ishida had the field to himself, while I had to listen to George, who never once stopped talking. He was telling me how he and his sister had lost their way in the woods at Miyajima a few days before, when the train was brought to a sudden and violent stop.

The brakes were jammed on so quickly that the wheels skidded and grated on the rails, whilst the cars cannoned into one another with such force that many of the passengers were thrown from their seats. As for Stevenson, he dropped his monocle, caught it in his left hand, and putting it back in his eye, assumed the expression of a man who has been personally insulted.

"A bally accident," he observed. "Something on the line. By gad, we've run into the jolly old Russian army."

There was commotion from one end of the train to the other. Passengers were hanging out of the windows; some had even gone so far as to climb down upon the footboard. An excited little guard dashed along the train with a red flag in his hand and for no apparent reason blowing a whistle.

We could see in front of us an empty freight train of which several of the leading cars had been completely telescoped. There was no sign of the engine.

In less than five minutes we discovered what had happened. Just ahead was a culvert over a small stream that came down from the pale blue mountains above Oyama. This is undoubtedly the most picturesque section of the whole Sanyo Railway; and it was with something of a shock that the Japanese passengers on board realized that the war had been brought home to them in one of the most tranquil and beautiful places in all Japan, where the great height of Oshima towers above the pine clad sacred island, where no dog may bark, where no man may be born or die.

The culvert had been blown up about twenty minutes before. The villagers, many of whom had been at work in the rice fields since daybreak, were ready to swear that they had seen no stranger in the neighborhood, either that morning or the day before. The masonry had been shattered by a terrible explosion, and a few minutes afterwards, the empty freight train, returning to Osaka, had smashed into the gully before the engineer could be warned. The engine had turned over on its side, both the engineer and the fireman being killed, whilst the leading trucks had been derailed.

The cutting of a main line of communication in time of war must result in waste of time and in confusion; though in all probability nobody was put to greater discomfort than my fellow passengers on the Tokyo train. Within a few minutes military patrols had appeared as if from out of the ground, and no one was allowed to leave the cars. And there the train, already several hours late, was obliged to remain until the small hours of the following morning. The line being blocked between Hiroshima and the culvert, a breakdown gang came down from Oyama within half an hour; and the railroad was cleared, the débris removed and a temporary bridge erected within eighteen hours.

There were two men on board the train who had no great reason to regret the mishap. Both Sawayanagi Ishida and myself had been thereby granted eighteen additional hours of Lilian Stevenson's company.

It would be difficult to imagine a situation that promoted greater intimacy. So crowded was the train that it was impossible to lower the sleeping berths, and the travelers had to sit upright all night long, packed together like so many sardines. Obtaining what food we could on board, we fell asleep at intervals in an atmosphere thick with the sweet scented odor of Japanese tobacco. Adversity made friends of strangers; whereas Lilian and I were very far from that.

And whilst I was coming to the determination never again to let her out of my sight, George Stevenson fell sound asleep, bolt upright, and with his monocle still in his eye.

And presently he was snoring softly, a kind of subdued bass accompaniment to the rustling of newspapers of which the belated travelers were reduced to reading the advertisements, the sibilant phrases of polite Japanese gossip with its many "please-excuse-me's" and "condescends"; and the intermittent tapping of the little Japanese *kiseru*, or bamboo tobacco pipes.

CHAPTER IV

THE GHOSTS OF THE WATERFALL

AFTER a night spent in such trying conditions no woman can look her best. For all that, the following morning, Lilian seemed extraordinarily unruffled, as far as her personal appearance was concerned, though she looked both tired and pale. As for her brother, he was as immaculate as ever. With his clothes uncreased and not a hair out of place, he was mainly concerned with the polishing of his eyeglass, whilst he freely expressed his opinions.

"I'll not stay on this damn' train an hour longer than I need," said he. "Most of our luggage is booked through to Yokohama, but my sister and I are going to get off as soon as we can."

"Then you've definitely decided not to go on to Yokohama?" I asked, more concerned about his answer than he for the moment imagined.

"Good Lord, yes! Can't expect a girl to stick another night of this sort of thing! I've traveled faster in a rickshaw. I've found out we're going to stop at a place called Gawazaki. We ought to get there soon after sundown. That'll do for us."

"I shouldn't advise Gawazaki," I suggested.

"Why not? Sort of out-of-the-way place I should like to see. There's a temple there with a golden gutter, and they say the view from the pagoda at Takara-dera's wonderful."

"Sure," said I. "But you'll be too dangerously close to Osuma for comfort. That's another big garrison town, you know."

"Really," he drawled. "Thought I knew Japan pretty well, and never knew that. Still I don't suppose we'll stay long there. A hot bath—which you can always get in this country—a good night's rest in a Japanese inn, a stroll the next morning to see the local sights, and then we can go on to Kyoto by rickshaw."

"And from there?" I asked.

"Oh, just the usual beaten track," said he. "Down the rapids from Lake Biwa; and we might have a look at the cormorant fishing at Gifu, if they're still doing it."

Though I was silent after that, I had already made up my mind. I knew that if I let Lilian go I would never see her again.

Later in the day I told Ishida the news and watched him closely. He answered me apparently without emotion, without looking up from his *bento*—the small box containing rice and fish that he had bought at Osaka.

"Is that so?" said he. "I am sorry."

That was all. But the tone of his voice, the expression of his face spoke more than volumes. The man was in purgatory. With a fierce love of his country, he had now another cause to regret not only that he was deformed, but even that he had been born a Japanese.

"Ishida," said I, "I, too, am going to get off at Gawazaki."

I hadn't meant to be so blunt. It was like stealing a march on an old comrade. But Ishida never moved a muscle of his face.

"I thought you were going straight on to Tokyo," he observed.

"I've changed my mind. My business in Tokyo can wait. In fact, it will have to wait."

"Are you sure of that?" he asked, as polite as ever. "You told me, I think, you had a document of some importance. Please do not think me impertinent. It is no affair of mine."

"I can go to Tokyo afterward," said I.

"And before that?" he asked, looking up at me for the first time.

A kind of silly sigh was the only answer

he got to that. I couldn't tell him, of all people, what was really in my mind, though of course the poor devil knew.

After that he sat silent for a long time, looking out of the window, surveying the green terraced rice fields that rose like a series of steps to the pine woods on the hills.

There were no questions asked at Gawazaki, which was a little station tucked away among the hills whither the overloaded train had crawled with tedious slowness. By the light of the one lantern that illumined the platform, I saw Ishida's face as the train steamed out of the station on its way to Kyoto. He was smiling and bowing repeatedly. Whatever his innermost feelings might have been, he could never forget the innate politeness of his race.

"*Sayonara de gozaimasu*," he called. "Augustly goodby. May this greatly honorable meeting soon repeat itself."

Thus he vanished with the lights of the moving train, his identity and the rebellious thoughts that surged within him swallowed by the darkness.

The Hyaku-un-do Inn at Gawazaki—as the Japanese themselves would call it, the Hostel of a Thousand Pleasant Walks. A land that lends itself to romance, richer in coloring than any country in the world. In view of the very reason for which I was there, and the fact that I was left alone in Lilian's company for three whole days, what happened was inevitable.

I TOLD her I loved her. And at the very moment when she made me the happiest man in the world, I had to swear that the whole thing was to be kept secret, even from her brother.

She would give me no reason for this, beyond a certain indefinite statement that there was much, if all went well, that I would learn in due course from her own lips, and no one's else. And then, if she had told me nothing that had made me change my mind, we could face the world together.

Though I laughed at the idea that anything she might tell me could make the slightest difference, I couldn't move her. Nor would she give me even an inkling of the truth.

As I understood the arrangement, for the time being we were both free, bound together by nothing but our own natural inclinations. For myself, I was content with that, in the knowledge that she really cared for me. That was more than I had ever dared to expect; and I thanked Providence that in those three days her brother kept conveniently out of the way. For it was George Stevenson's custom to disappear immediately after breakfast, and often not to return until late at night.

I knew Japan, and I loved every inch of it, from the first bloom of the cherry blossom to the last red maple leaf, the passing shadows of the clouds upon the rice fields, the white crest of Fuji mirrored on the deep waters of Hakone. Lilian and I found ourselves in a lovers' paradise. We took long rickshaw rides to hillside temples; we idled away hours feeding goldfish with crumbs of rice cake; or together from some mountaintop whither we had climbed we would look down upon the blue water of the Inland Sea with its scores of tree clad islands. With such a companion, surely, the heart of man could ask no more of the placid Shinto gods whose shrines we visited.

On the third night I had no inclination to go early to bed. I had every reason to call myself a happy man, but the stipulation upon which Lilian had insisted puzzled me more than made me anxious. I never doubted her for an instant; but by this time I was beginning to have suspicions about her brother. He was supposed to be a tourist; and during those three days, when his sister and I had been seeing the sights of the neighborhood, I hadn't spoken three words to the fellow.

I wanted to think that out; and besides, when a man's in love, a solitary moonlight walk in such a country well suits his frame of mind. I found the turbulent waters of the rapids that came

down from the mountains but a few hundred yards from the inn a fit accompaniment for my meditations.

As the night was chilly I walked quickly and followed a footpath that ran by the side of the stream, a path that led upward to some mountain village. There was no one about, no sound but the long thunder of the water, no sign of life save the lights in the paper windows of the inn where we were living.

There were black rocks in midstream, fringed with white foam that made me think of the *gaki*, the ghosts of the waterfalls, those who had perished of hunger in the Buddhist inferno. Because these spirits were known to be abroad, Japanese peasants would never let their children stray at night by running water.

But I went my way upon the path, with no certain destination. I just felt that I could go on walking forever and I must have covered two or three miles, when I gained a place where the torrent came through a great rent in the rocks—a vertical sheet of living water that glittered under the moon like a beam of light. It might, indeed, have been a sword of fire from which light seemed more to emanate than to be reflected.

THE FOAM in the pool was like a cloud of white smoke, issuing from between steep cliffs crowned with foliage. In midstream was a solitary rock that resembled some strange amphibious monster, a gigantic saurian with two humps on its back, like a camel, and between these two humps, stretched upon his back, with arms and legs extended, lay the figure of a Japanese.

The idea of the *gaki* flashed into my mind, before a second glance assured me that I was confronted by nothing supernatural. This man was dead. His very attitude declared it.

A parchment colored face was full in the moonlight, the kind of face no one could forget. He had stiff hair that stood upright on his head, like wire; and all his features were crooked, as if in his fall his nose, mouth, even his chin had been shifted the fraction of an inch to the right. And his left eye was higher than the other one. Yet there was no scar, except a great gash across the forehead where he must have struck a branch of a tree.

I could do nothing. The body, though not more than twenty yards away from me, was well out of my reach, the intervening space being filled with a rush of water in which no swimmer could live. All I could do was to report what I had found to the police. The dead man, I had every reason to suppose, would still be there at daybreak.

Retracing my steps and walking more quickly than before, I had come within sight of Gawazaki, when I was suddenly brought to a halt by the sound of breaking branches, of twigs snapping under foot, high above me on the other side of the rapids.

I'm not inclined to be nervous, but what I had just seen and this unexpected and inexplicable disturbance had the effect of putting me instantly on my guard. I drew back into the shadow of the trees, clenched my fists, and there awaited what should happen.

As far as I could make out, the slope opposite was almost precipitous, though clothed with profuse and tangled foliage, overtopped here and there by conifers. Through this undergrowth a human being, or an animal, was breaking his way with alarming rapidity, drawing nearer and nearer to the rapids. Throughout the swift descent there were innumerable and sudden checks, invariably followed by the loud snapping of a branch, and then another drop accompanied by a shower of stones and earth into the water.

The figure of a man suddenly emerged into the moonlight some thirty feet above the place where I was standing. Feet foremost, he descended through the air; and at the very moment when death seemed imminent, he caught with both hands the branch of a tree that overhung the water, where he swung like an ape.

It was evident that he was both unhurt and in full possession of his presence of

mind; for, looking about him for some safe place where he could drop, he swung himself to the end of the branch and fell lightly to the ground, but a few feet from the water's edge.

I was too curious to move. At the base of the cliff the newcomer was in the shadow, and even for a moment lost altogether to view, until presently he reappeared about twenty yards farther downstream.

He had been quick to see that this was the only place where he could hope to cross, for there were several rocks in the water at no great distance from one another. With extraordinary agility and without a moment's hesitation he began to spring from one of these to another, until he had reached the other side, where to his astonishment he found himself face to face with myself where I had stepped out from under the trees.

And even then, I honestly think, I was the more surprised of the two, for the moonlight disclosed George Stevenson with his monocle still in his eye. Had it not been for that, I might not have recognized him. For his face and hands were cut in a score of places; his clothes were in tatters and stained with blood; the right arm of his coat had been ripped open at the shoulder, and there was a great rent in the trousers that showed a bare, bleeding knee.

For a moment he was too surprised to speak. The manner in which he had crossed the rapids had almost taken my breath away—for the path across those slippery rocks was more than any man in his senses would have risked, unless he had a tiger on his heels.

"What on earth are you doing here?" I asked.

"Fell down the bally old mountain," he drawled. "Lost my bearings, don't you know. 'Pon my soul, Norton, my dear fellow, I wouldn't choose that way again —not for a bucketful of fivers!"

Then, without another word, he grasped me by an arm and set off with long strides down the pathway, which was one of the Thousand Pleasant Walks.

"Come along," said he, in a more excited tone, as if suddenly alive to danger. "We've got to be moving out of this place and, by Jove, you may take it from me, there's no time to lose!"

CHAPTER V

IN THE DARK

GEORGE STEVENSON'S lapse from his habitual sang-froid was but a momentary aberration for which no doubt he was inwardly ashamed. He was, indeed, one of the most self-possessed, cool headed men I ever came across in all my travels. Before we had gone fifty yards upon the pathway to the inn, he had calmed down considerably and was able to give me a more or less plausible account of his adventures.

He had been exploring the mountains, he said, and waxed eloquent upon the subject of the view from a neighboring hilltop. An autumn sunset on the Inland Sea beyond the heights of Awaji was a sight well worth seeing; and so impressed had he been that he had quite overlooked the fact that, when the sun did go down, he would have some difficulty in finding his way back to Gawazaki.

It had been slow work in the darkness; for there had been places where he had been obliged to crawl backward on all fours, feeling blindly for every foothold. And then he had slipped. He had gone over a precipice, tearing his hands, bruising every bone in his body, uprooting shrubs that he grasped frantically, whilst the branches had broken beneath his weight. Just the kind of mishap that might have happened to any one—he was careful to lay stress on that.

As for myself, well, I did not know what to make of it. For the first time I began to wonder who the devil he really was. I couldn't understand why for the last three days he had so completely neglected his sister.

"Do you know," I asked him, "you're not the only man who has come to grief tonight on these mountains? And the

other fellow wasn't so lucky. I suppose, you'd call it coincidence."

He stopped stone dead at that and faced me. We stood full in the moonlight which was reflected by George's eyeglass. A little way ahead of us, down the valley, we could see the lights of the Hyaku-undo Inn, square patches of golden yellow visible through the trees.

"What d'ye mean by that?" he demanded quickly.

"Only that there happens to be a dead man on a rock farther up the rapids. A Japanese," said I.

He began to whistle a few bars of a tune, and then broke off.

"You're right," he exclaimed. "Coincidence, by Jove! Devilish extraordinary, all the same! One would have thought a Japanese'd have been able to find his way about, eh, what?"

Without another word he turned and walked on, leaving me to follow, as puzzled and mystified as ever, firmly convinced that there was more at the back of this business than he would tell me.

When we reached the inn, Stevenson walked straight into the little entrance hall without removing his boots—a breach of Japanese etiquette, as no one knew better than he. There was no one about. The proprietor and his *nesan* were asleep. The hall, illumined by a large oil paper lantern, was carpeted with matting and almost devoid of furniture and decorations, save for a *hibachi*, or firebox, and a *kakemono* on one of the paper walls.

Stevenson grasped me by the lapel of my coat.

"We don't want to wake my sister," said he. "She and I'll have to make an early start tomorrow. You can come with us, if you want to—but perhaps you'd better not."

I was determined to get at the truth.

"Look here," said I. "There must be a reason for this."

"For what?"

"All this secrecy, this constant change of plans. You assured me your object was to show your sister the country, and for three days you've never been near her!"

"Left that to you," said he, smiling. "Thought you'd like it."

"Sure," I answered. "I've raised no objection; because, to tell you the truth, I think your sister the most charming girl I've ever met."

I couldn't tell him more than that, because of my promise to Lilian.

"Well, then," he asked, "what are you grousing about?"

"Nothing. It may be no business of mine, but your conduct doesn't seem to fit in with that of the ordinary tourist. I'm not fool enough to believe you are. Why should you want to leave this place in such a hurry?"

He withdrew his eyeglass, polished it on the sleeve of his coat, replaced it, and then tapped me on the chest.

"I'd better tell you," said he, as if in confidence. "I wasn't quite honest just now. I admit that. That fellow who went over the cliff into the rapids was with me. He was seen with me this afternoon. Of course, I had nothing to do with his accident; but I know what the Japanese are, and so do you. The police are as inquisitive as monkeys, with an inflated idea of their own importance. Circumstantial evidence and all that may be against me. That's why I've got to clear off—quick."

"I see," said I, far from convinced.

Indeed, the position in which I found myself was ambiguous, to say the least. I was fascinated by the girl; I was suspicious of her brother—though I never for a moment suspected the real truth.

With forced merriment, an obvious attempt to put me at my ease, he burst into laughter.

"You've got nothing to worry about, at any rate," said he. "Turn in and get a good night's rest."

Such advice was easy enough to give. It was another matter to take it. Lying on a Japanese *futon* by the side of which was a *hibachi* to warm the room, I found sleep impossible.

I had a lot upon my mind, doubts that I couldn't dispel, questions I couldn't answer.

EVEN Lilian was keeping something from me. I didn't mind that so much, because from the beginning she had been so sweet about it all. She had given me to understand that the circumstances—whatever they were—were beyond her control, and that sooner or later things would be all right between us. I was romantic enough to think that lovers should share everything in common. I had absolute trust in her, but I didn't trust her brother; and naturally I couldn't reconcile one sentiment with the other. From the way in which she always spoke of him, I could see that she admired him immensely for qualities that were certainly lost upon me.

I had no real reason to make me suspect the truth; and I wouldn't have bothered my head about George for two minutes, if it hadn't been that he was Lilian's brother. As it was, I didn't know what to make out of an enigmatical globe trotter who wandered about by himself, got mixed up with fatal accidents, and then declared that he had to clear off in a hurry.

Though there was something about the man I liked, if it hadn't been for Lilian, I would have put him down as some kind of crook, but I never doubted for a second that he wasn't English. His accent, mannerisms, clothes—all were perfectly affected.

Thinking of Lilian, it was on her account I was alarmed. If George had got himself into difficulties, if he was in any way responsible for the dead man who was lying out in the rapids, his sister might be compromised.

Among my disordered thoughts that night was the reflection that all this time I was being neglectful of a sacred trust. For these three days I had been so incontestibly happy that I had forgotten all about Nashimura. As I lay awake, my conscience smote me. I remembered the document sewn in the lining of my coat, and it occurred to me as a coincidence that we happened to be only a few miles from Osuma, the very place where Colonel Yamada held an important command.

In the end I gave up all idea of going to sleep. I had broken out into a cold perspiration. Though it was winter and the climate cold, the little paper walled room felt stuffy.

I flung the Japanese quilt from off me. Without lighting a lamp I got to my feet, went to the wall and drew back one of the sliding sections that opened on to a veranda, facing the tree covered hill.

I was wearing a kimono. For some reason or other no one ever sleeps in anything else in a Japanese inn. I stood there for some time, still trying to puzzle the thing out, and finally deciding that the next day I must ask Lilian to confide in me.

Certain indefinite noises in the thickets not more than a few yards from the veranda caused me to hold my breath. Straining my ears, I tried to listen, and was then convinced that I saw vague shapes, dark shadows moving under the trees.

I tried to assure myself that this was nothing but my own imagination. I was in a fit mood to fancy things. And then, alarm got hold of me. I can't say why. I was suddenly afraid for Lilian. Within the inn, unconscious of some hidden danger, the girl I loved was asleep.

It was that thought that gave me resolution. Whatever happened, I was going to stick to her. I may have done wrong to leave the train, ignoring Ishida's advice, but I couldn't desert Lilian now—not, at any rate, until I knew the truth.

I remained outside on the veranda for several minutes and as I heard nothing further, I came to the conclusion that my senses must have deceived me. Resolved, and yet with nerves overstrung, I went back into the room, closed the wall, and again flung myself down upon the *futon*.

And even then it took me more than an hour to go to sleep. I lay awake listening to the sullen, continuous roar of the rapids. Within the inn itself all was silence. I actually felt my pulse before I dropped off into that semi-conscious

condition which is neither slumber nor wakefulness.

My brain was so helplessly filled with confused, jumbled thoughts that I thought it probable that I had contracted a touch of fever.

My dreams had the horror of nightmares, the inconsequence of the visions of one who is drugged. I saw the *gaki*, the ghosts of the waterfalls, and the white face of Lilian Stevenson, with streaming hair, like another Ophelia, motionless in the midst of streaming waters.

And then somehow or other, Nashimura came into the thing, Nashimura with his back broken, lying at the end of the Sawachi Tunnel . . .

They were wheeling him through the tunnel, and it was hard work, for the trolley was heavy—a kind of stone of Sisyphus that kept rolling backward . . . And then I was struggling. The coolies had deserted me. I had the whole weight of the trolley upon my chest, a mountain weight that threatened to crush me.

Whether awake or asleep, I was suddenly fighting desperately for breath. I believed the whole weight of the trolley to be on top of me, with the dead body of Nashimura. I felt that I was being strangled in the pitch blackness of the tunnel. . . .

The very tunnel itself might have collapsed and buried me alive.

There was a pungent odor in my nostrils, the smell of chloroform. I couldn't cry out. Everything about me had become soft, like wool. My teeth bit upon what might have been cloth; my clenched fists grasped eiderdown, a padded Japanese quilt or *futon* . . .

Then suddenly I came out of the darkness into an endless blue, toward fire where there were circles of concentric light, halos that extended to eternity, blinding. I was conscious of a noise within my brain like the rattle of a loom, the whir of an electric fan. And then I remembered no more. My identity was blotted out.

CHAPTER VI

A DOG TO THE WOLVES

MY RETURN to consciousness, so far as my mental faculties were concerned, must have been something like the resuscitation of the drowned. I remember finding myself lying flat upon my back with my eyes wide open, perfectly aware of my surroundings, but unable to take the slightest interest in anything, even to think.

It was broad daylight; and the sun was shining through the paper walls upon which were stenciled the shadows of surrounding trees. The *futon* was crumpled; the quilt had been thrown aside; the firebox had been upset and the dead ashes scattered on the matting floor.

I did not move. I vaguely recollected that something had happened during the night. I could not say what. Nor was I sure whether I had awaked from sleep or from the effects of some powerful drug. I was inclined to the latter belief, because my head was bursting and my temples throbbing like drums.

Assuming a sitting position, I passed a hand across my forehead—and at once my attention was attracted by the sleeve of the coat I was wearing. Indeed, the shock I received had the immediate effect of putting me in full possession of my senses.

I was certain, in the first place, that I had gone to sleep in a Japanese kimono, the kimono I had been wearing when I had gone out on to the veranda. I was now dressed in a tweed suit—trousers, waistcoat, coat. And, moreover, that suit was George Stevenson's!

Detail by detail I recalled my nightmare. Nashimura, the trolley, the sensation of being suffocated, how I had thought I was being crushed to death in the Sawachi Tunnel. At that I sprang to my feet. I stood swaying, as if drunk. For the life of me I couldn't keep my balance.

I had certainly been drugged, attacked whilst I was asleep. Physical reality had been interwoven with the phantasma-

goria of my dreams. And what was more, my own clothes had been stolen, for they were nowhere in the room.

Remembering Nashimura's written confession, I fumbled in the pockets of the coat, the waistcoat and trousers. I still had my watch and bunch of keys, even my small change—a few silver sen—my own wallet containing the Japanese notes I had brought with me from Moji. Nothing was missing except the sealed envelope that contained the statement of Nikolai Yashvin, written in Korea many years before.

I knew now that my suspicions had been right. George Stevenson was a rogue, some kind of adventurer who was playing a double game. What game that was I couldn't say; and I was still too dazed and too astounded to try to think it all out. Of one thing only I was certain—no one else but Lilian's brother could have been my assailant in the night.

I knew the suit well enough; I had seen it in the train from Hiroshima. It was a well cut suit of gray tweed, but was now tattered and torn in a dozen places. The right sleeve of the coat had been ripped open above the elbow, and there was a rectangular cut upon one knee of the trousers, which were stained with blood. George had even gone so far as to get rid of his eyeglass, for there was the thing dangling round my neck upon its thin silken cord, the glass tinkling against one of the waistcoat buttons whenever I moved.

For a moment, and for the first time in nearly a week, I forgot Lilian. My sole idea was to have it out with the man who had assaulted me. And in this frame of mind, boiling with indignation, I rushed from the room—to find myself confronted by the landlord who came out with an exclamation of surprise when he saw me.

The old fellow could do nothing but stare, occasionally dropping his eyes to the floor as he bowed his excuses. He declared that both Stevenson and his sister had disappeared in the night. He had already made inquiries, and had discovered two facts that he couldn't explain. First, soon after midnight, George had hired two rickshaws from the village nearby and had paid a big price for them; and second, there was a party of police bivouacked not far away in the woods. The gendarmes had come from Osuma; but he had not been able to find out by which road the rickshaws had left the village. Stevenson had dealt quite fairly with the landlord, leaving behind a letter of apology and several yen notes—more than enough to cover his account.

HEARING this, I at once decided to go up to the village to make inquiries on my own account. I was determined to run Stevenson to earth. For the first time in my life I felt revengeful, whilst the circumstance that Lilian had left me so suddenly, without a word of explanation, was mortifying, to say the least of it.

Hatless, looking more like a tramp than a well-to-do citizen of the United States who had always somewhat prided himself on his personal appearance, I rushed out of the Hyaku-un-do Inn, and had not gone twenty yards along the narrow path under the maples before I was seized by the arms and frog-marched up to a Japanese officer of gendarmes.

Nor was this the worst of it; for I soon found out that my intimate knowledge of the language was going to profit me nothing. Though I declared my identity with all the emphasis I could, though I protested that I was ready to declare on oath that I was an American engineer who had been employed by the Japanese government on the new Kiushu railroad, the gendarme refused to believe a word of it. The little fellow just nodded repeatedly, sucking his teeth, just as Nashimura had been wont to do, and seemed as pleased with himself as he was positive that he had got hold of the right man.

And what he had to say was a revelation to me, though a moment after, it seemed incredible that I hadn't thought of it before. That little Japanese police

officer told me frankly that he anticipated the congratulations of his superiors for having apprehended an exceedingly clever Russian spy who went by the name of Nikolai Yashvin!

This news descended upon me like a thunderbolt. So stupendous did it seem that for more than a minute I was rendered speechless—a circumstance that probably told against me, being taken as evidence of my guilt.

For Yashvin was the very man whose written statement had been given me by Nashimura, who had now escaped with the sealed envelope upon which I had written my own name.

I remembered hearing about him in Fusan at the time when he had escaped from the garrison guardroom. But then I never associated him with Lilian Stevenson. There was no reason why I should have done so.

In my confused brain I was now trying to reason it all out, to find some other explanation for the sudden disappearance of the girl and her brother, for the cowardly attack that had been made upon myself.

Even when a pair of handcuffs had been snapped upon my wrists I found it difficult to believe that Stevenson and Yashvin were one and the same man. And yet, there was no getting away from the fact. I had only to remember certain things that had happened to be sure of it.

George Stevenson had come on board the Tokyo train at Hiroshima where there was a military arsenal. He must therefore have been somewhere in the neighborhood when the culvert on the Sanyo Railway had been destroyed, probably by an infernal machine with a clockwork time fuse. And he had left the train at Gawazaki for a definite purpose. The village was right away from the beaten track and only a few miles from Osuma, another garrison town no less important than Hiroshima.

That accounted, too, for George's daily disappearances. He must have been suspected in Osuma, from which place he may have escaped by the skin of his teeth. And then there was the man whom I had seen lying apparently dead upon a rock in the rapids, the man with the crooked face. Stevenson had not remained upon the mountaintop that evening just to watch the sunset on the Inland Sea. Hunted, brought to bay and compelled to fight for his life, he had got rid of the sleuth hound by hurling him over the cliff. As for the rest of his story, it might have been true; he might have lost his way in the darkness and fallen by accident.

That didn't matter to me. I had other things to think about. Yashvin, who knew that he had brought a hornets' nest about his ears, had cleared out at the eleventh hour and had been clever enough to leave behind him a kind of decoy, in the shape of my unsuspecting self.

It was with no degree of satisfaction that I realized the truth, the precise situation in which I found myself. It was just as if I were a dog that had been thrown to the wolves. I might be torn to pieces, but it would give George Stevenson—or Nikolai Yashvin—a breathing space in which to get safely away.

However, though it was all now as plain as daylight to me, it was not the least good trying to explain the circumstances to the officer of gendarmes who was convinced that he had got hold of the right man. I tried everything—expostulation, indignation, logic—and then gave it up.

With a shrug of the shoulders, I submitted to Fate. I may have hoped that it would turn out all right in the end, but at the time I felt they were welcome to hang me or have me shot.

For the bitterest, cruelest part of the whole muddled business was the problem of the girl I loved. With a sinking feeling that was half mortification and half resentment, I realized that Lilian might not be Yashvin's sister after all.

Of that thought I was almost immediately ashamed. I couldn't doubt her love. I knew now why she had asked me to wait. And remembering that, I couldn't believe that she had been a party to the

dastardly trick that had been played upon me.

I had plenty of time for these dismal reflections and many others of a like nature upon the hilly road to Osuma. Between armed guards I was marched into the town at about midday, when the narrow streets were crowded with townsfolk and soldiers. It had been raining, and the little women were hobbling about on their wooden *geta*.

THERE followed a brief investigation of the case by the general officer in command of the garrison, in an office crowded with staff officers amongst whom I looked in vain for Colonel Yamada.

It was useless for me to protest my innocence. I couldn't prove my identity. The intelligence department had reported from Hiroshima that the man who had left that place on the Tokyo train had been identified as Nikolai Yashvin. That same man had been seen in Osuma the day before.

And then came the thunderbolt—something that made me realize with the suddenness of being immersed in ice cold water that the whole affair was just about as serious as it could be.

For a witness was called who was none other than the man with the crooked face, whom I had seen in the moonlight stretched out in the midst of the Gawazaki rapids, whom I had then believed to be dead.

There was no mistaking the fellow, who was dressed in native clothes, a dark kimono, and who turned out to be a secret service agent. There was a white bandage across his forehead at an angle, which made his face look even more crooked than it really was. Giving his evidence in a quiet voice, he declared, to my horror, that he was ready to swear that I was the man he had followed from Osuma.

Involuntarily, I made matters worse for myself. The moment I recognized him I let out a gasp that naturally enough was misinterpreted. The witness spoke with conviction. I was the man who had attacked him on the hills, who had lain in wait for him and sprung at him from behind a boulder, hurling him over a precipice. His life had been saved as by a miracle that he might live to serve Japan. So far as I could gather, he had been picked up early that morning by one of the police patrols who were scouring the country for Yashvin.

Thinking the matter out that night in my cell, I presumed that Yashvin and the girl might succeed in getting out of the country. In that case, it was all up with me, unless I was allowed to call witnesses to prove who I was. There was always a chance there might be somebody in Osuma who knew me. On the other hand —on the evidence of a single witness, of the clothes I was wearing and the eyeglass—I might not be given an opportunity to clear myself. The Japanese had adopted Prussian methods in much the same manner as they had trained their soldiers on the lines of the German drill book, and they weren't out to wage war with buttoned foils.

CHAPTER VII

WATCH AND WARD

THAT night, when I was housed in a little whitewashed cell about ten square yards in area, in which there was nothing but a straw mattress, I made no attempt to sleep until the small hours of morning. I was perished with cold; I had nothing to eat but a piece of stale rice cake, and when fatigue compelled me to sit down the mattress was so thin that it was almost as hard as the stone floor upon which it was spread.

All the same, my physical discomforts were as nothing when compared to my mental anxieties. I had no more lost faith in Lilian than I had lost my love for her; but it was with feelings of dismay that I now realized that I did not even know who she was. From all accounts she was Nikolai Yashvin's sister. That conveyed nothing to me, beyond the fact that she was a Russian.

At the outbreak of war it was natural enough that I should have been entirely pro-Japanese in my sympathies. Like most neutrals, I regarded the Japanese as the inoffensive and weaker party who had been unjustifiably attacked by a powerful and aggressive enemy.

I had certainly no particular prejudice against the profession of spy. I knew that a man who undertook such work in a patriotic cause was far more deserving of the name of courage than he who distinguished himself in the heat of action; and even now I am ready to admit that the man who passed himself off for all those weeks as George Stevenson was the bravest man I ever met.

And his sister could be no less courageous than he. It was on her account that night that I suffered purgatory. I had no idea where she was. I realized how great was her danger. I knew that if she and her brother were captured, the same fate would be meted out to both of them. They would be put up against a wall and shot within a few hours of their arrest.

I went through the same kind of feverish anxiety that I had experienced the night before—only this time it was a thousand times worse, and I have little doubt that I ran a temperature.

I saw that I could do nothing until I myself was free. That was clearly the first task in front of me; and then it was that I conceived the idea that, after a delay of two whole days, proved successful.

I bethought me of Colonel Yamada, the man whom I had known slightly in Fusan seven years before. If he were still in Osuma, I might be able to effect my own release, though it was obvious that I would have to play my cards with exceeding care.

Accordingly, the following morning, I asked the orderly officer who visited me whether Colonel Yamada was still in the garrison. And on being told that he was, I asked if this officer would see me.

The reply I received was to the effect that Colonel Yamada flatly refused to see me. I knew the reason for that. Convinced that I was Nikolai Yashvin, he dreaded the resurrection of his own past delinquences. He was a ruined man if I let out the truth.

Recognizing that, if Yamada was allowed to have his own way, I would be kept under close arrest until the time of my execution, I applied to the commandant, reporting that I had an important statement to make. And as a result of these efforts, on the morning of the third day after my arrest I was led before Colonel Yamada himself who, I was astonished to discover, was the officer in charge of the intelligence department. It was actually through him that I had been identified as Yashvin and arrested at Gawazaki.

It must be remembered that I had had plenty of time to prepare myself for the interview. I was resolved to say no more than I need to establish my innocence. Whatever happened, I must never for a moment let him suspect that I knew anything about what had happened in Fusan, what Nashimura had told me. To offer threats would be fatal. I was wholly in his power, and he could have me shot at a moment's notice.

With an escort that did credit to Nikolai Yashvin, I was marched into the office of the chief intelligence officer whom I found seated at a table covered with papers, before him a brass ashtray that was filled with the cardboard tips of Japanese cigarets.

In these seven years Yamada had changed very little. His mustache was grayer and more like a toothbrush than ever. He had the same hollow cheeks, sunken eyes and yellow teeth. We conversed in the Japanese language.

"Colonel Yamada," said I, "I see that you do not remember me. I had the honor of meeting you some years ago in Fusan."

HE STARED at me very hard and then lighted another cigaret, screwing his eyes and looking at me again. He may already have had doubts as to whether I was really the spy; and in any case it was

an awkward moment for him. For, if I was Yashvin, he would have his work cut out to avoid exposure; and if I wasn't, he had made a mistake, and the man he really wanted had somehow escaped.

"I seem to remember your face," said he, with doubt in his voice.

"If that is so," I answered, "you must know that I have been arrested on a false charge. I may be about the same height as the man you want, and we both happen to be clean shaven; but he is darker than I and we are not very alike in features."

"Then you are not Yashvin?" he asked.

"Certainly not. My name is Jeffrey Norton, and as I have protested over and over again, I'm an American engineer who has been working under the Japanese government for nearly eight years."

"Norton!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Norton! Why, yes, you were on railway work in Korea?"

"Under my friend, Sawayanagi Ishida, whom you have only to call as a witness."

"That is unnecessary," he took me up. "I remember now. We met in Korea. And you have since been working in Kiushu. You came east from Shimonoseki on the same train as the Yashvins. That is how my man, Kinkozan, made a very serious mistake. I see it now. But how comes it you are wearing Yashvin's clothes?"

Surprised at the extent of Yamada's knowledge and the reliability of his information, I shrugged my shoulders, thinking silence the best policy. I was determined to say nothing that would help to convict Lilian.

I looked at the colonel again and saw that he was puzzled. There was no one in the room, but the non-commissioned officer in charge of the escort and about half a dozen expressionless soldiers, the tallest of whom did not come up to my shoulder. They stood on either side of me and behind me with bayonets fixed.

"From what you have told me," said he, "you are evidently familiar with Nikolai Yashvin. Where did you see him last?"

"At Gawazaki," I answered, frankly. "We were actually staying in the same hotel. I had no idea then as to his identity."

"Was he alone?" Yamada asked.

I lowered my eyes to the floor.

"No," I replied.

"Exactly," said the other. "He had his sister with him. Anna Yashvin. Her activities have long been known to us. It is their custom to work together. Our intelligence department—which is very Japanese—has known about them for years, and the moment war was declared we were on the look out for them. They are a very formidable couple, because they can both speak foreign languages, not only idomatically, but they have all the slang and dialect. They can even adopt at will what may be called national mannerisms. When Nikolai Yashvin talks German, he looks like a German and eats like a German, stuffing his table napkin into his collar. Lately he has been passing himself off as an English tourist. That was necessary, because he was working with his sister, who knew many people in Japan."

As I listened to all this, my heart sank within me. I had already thought out the line I was to take; and I had purposely told Yamada nothing that could be news to him. I had realized, too, that it would be quite useless for me to attempt to protect Lilian, whose real name I had just learnt was Anna. Yamada's secret service men were already on her track. If it was within the bounds of possibility for me to save her, I could only do so by first gaining my own freedom.

The colonel questioned me further about Korea; and then, having no further doubt as to my identity, and having also a personal matter to discuss, he dismissed the escort and proceeded to offer me the most profound apologies, overloading his sentences with honorific terms.

For the girl's sake I avoided telling him how Yashvin had managed to escape from Gawazaki at my expense. I allowed him to think that it was the officer in charge of the gendarme patrol who had made the

same mistake as the man with the crooked face, whose name was Kinkozan, and who had sworn that I was the Russian.

As soon as the colonel had made his peace with me, he began to get to work on his own account, little dreaming that I knew all the time what he was driving at.

"Since you have lately been working on the Kiushu Railway," he asked, "you may be able to tell me of a man about whom I wish to know? A man of the name of Nashimura?"

"I knew him well," said I—and waited.

WE WERE watching each other like a couple of tomcats, both suspicious, both on our guard—both, too, with our lives at stake, for Yamada's reputation meant as much to him as that.

"Exactly," said he. "It is true, I believe, that this man, Nashimura, is dead?"

"He met his death in an accident," said I.

"At which you were present?" he asked.

I saw, as in a flash, that he had had his own private spies in Kiushu, and I guessed now for the first time that they were the men who had attacked me that night at Moji. As I had not prepared myself for such a contingency, I felt nervous almost for the first time since I had entered the room.

"I saw him killed," I admitted. "His back was broken. He died within a few hours."

"And you were present at his deathbed?" he asked.

I looked him straight in the face.

"Colonel Yamada," said I, "you seem to know a lot about what happened in Kiushu only a fortnight ago."

He grinned, showing his yellow teeth, and then told me a barefaced lie to save his own skin.

"It is my business to know many things," he smiled. "I may now tell you in confidence that this man, Nashimura, was in the pay of Russia."

I feigned astonishment, and flatter myself I did fairly well.

"You don't mean that!" I cried, with an exclamation of surprise. "Impossible! He was one of the best workers I ever had."

"That doesn't alter the facts of the case," he went on. "There were certain documents in Nashimura's possession which it is my duty to obtain. I suppose, by no chance did he entrust these documents to you?"

I was ready to cap one lie with another, and a better one. I knew well enough that the little bemedaled sewer rat in front of me would rake up his ready made pretext to have me shot within twenty-four hours, if he knew that I had the whip hand of him. His whole career was at stake; and it was my business to let him think that I was ignorant of that.

"I have no documents in my possession," I declared. "You must know that already, Colonel Yamada, for I was searched two days ago."

"But you may have had such documents and got rid of them," he suggested, persistent in his inquiries.

"Colonel," I answered, "I'm well known to a hundred people in this country to be a loyal servant of the government of Japan."

"So I understand," said he, offering me a cigaret, which I readily accepted. "I have often heard of you, since we met in Korea."

"Then is it likely," I asked, "that a Russian spy, whether Yashvin or Nashimura, would entrust secret and confidential papers to me?"

That stumped him. I knew what he was thinking. He was wondering whether I suspected that it was his men who had attacked me at Moji.

I must have the faculty of thinking rapidly in a crisis, for I saw exactly how the land lay with him. Sedulous of his own honor, and now sincerely anxious to serve Japan to the best of his ability, he had taken steps to attempt to get hold of Nashimura's document that had served to blackmail him for seven years. His agents must have arrived in Kiushu on the very day of Nashimura's death. They

must have overhauled the dead man's clothes after I had left him; and finding nothing there, and knowing that I had attended him during his last hours, they had attacked me at Moji.

Yamada was now wondering whether I had any inkling of the truth. He kept looking at me furtively and screwing his eyes; and I believe my assumed frankness threw him completely off his guard.

Suddenly he gave a sigh of relief and leaned back in his chair. He was at last convinced in his own mind that I knew nothing at all.

"Do you happen to know," he asked, "whether Anna Yashvin left the hotel at Gawazaki at the same time as her brother?"

"I know nothing at all about it," I answered. "They got away in the middle of the night, when I was asleep."

"You were with them for three days, I understand?" he asked.

I admitted that. He was on a new tack now, trying to pump me of any information I might be able to give him. As a matter of fact, the boot was on the other foot; for it was I who was determined to get information out of him.

"I suppose," he went on, "you never overheard the Yashvins discussing their plans?"

"If they did so at Gawazaki," I answered, "it would only have been during the night. "They were seldom together in the day-time. And you must also remember, Colonel, that I had not the least idea who they were."

Chewing the cardboard tip of his cigaret, he still looked puzzled.

"Did they never tell you where they intended to go after leaving Gawazaki?" he asked.

He had belabored this point so persistently that I saw he regarded it of the greatest importance.

"Never," I answered. "But why do you ask?"

He hesitated a moment and then told me the truth, thinking no doubt that I might be able to offer a suggestion.

"When you were arrested," he said, "I had not the slightest doubt that my men had got hold of Yashvin. I thought it unnecessary for me to see you myself. I was all the more certain that you were the right man, because I have since heard from my agents that Anna Yashvin is now alone. Her brother is no longer with her."

I confess, the effect of that upon me was like an electric shock. But I did my best to retain my presence of mind.

"Yes," he continued, as if speaking to himself, "yesterday the girl was reported to be at Uji; but before we could telephone orders for her arrest, she had disappeared. The whole country is being searched, and she can only have gone down the Yodogawa Valley toward Nara. The latest reports are to the effect that a foreign woman, answering her description, has arrived at a small native inn at a place called Hanakura."

"Then she will be arrested within a few hours?" I asked.

It was an effort to restrain a tremor in my voice. I felt my face blanch, and feared that Yamada might notice it. But he was not looking at me.

"As you say," said he, "she will be arrested within a few hours. Kinkozan himself has gone down the line with orders to hand her over to the police. I have only to hear that she has been arrested to go to Nara myself, where she will be summarily executed, as an example to all enemy spies."

"Without a trial!" I exclaimed, unable any longer to conceal my feelings.

"Nothing will be necessary, beyond proof of identification," he grinned, again displaying his yellow, fanglike teeth. "I have her warrant here."

He tapped the pocket of his blue tunic under his row of gleaming medals that might have been of tin.

I saw what he was aiming at, and hated the little man like hellfire. He knew well enough that, if he brought Anna Yashvin before a court martial at Osuma, the treachery of which he had been guilty in Fusan would be exposed.

He remembered the time when as a junior major he had distinguished him-

self on the field of action in the China War and had been made commandant of the little Korean harbor. He remembered, too, how he had fallen to the blandishments of a foreign beauty—only to be duped. And this was his revenge.

When I realized that, it was all that I could do to keep my hands off him. I could have strangled him then and there, in the chair where he sat, chewing his cardboard cigarets.

With an effort I mastered myself, and spoke more or less in a natural voice.

"And you have no news of the other?" I asked. "Of Nikolai Yashvin?"

"He must have got away over the hills to Kobe," said he. "I fear there's a chance he has boarded some neutral foreign ship."

"That is a pity," I observed.

All the time I was trembling inwardly for Lilian, for I could not yet think of her by a name that was new to me. I was wondering how it had come about that she and her brother had separated. And the thought of that girl, wandering alone among the hills of Japan, when the odds were a hundred to one against her ultimate escape, was a reflection that appalled me, that left me cold with suspense.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAN WITH THE CROOKED FACE

OUTSIDE Yamada's office I took in a deep breath. I felt faint and sick and, though I was cold as ice, my forehead was wet with perspiration.

I had been given a warrant for my release, and with this in my possession I managed to pass the quarter guard at the gate of the barracks and wandered into the town like a man in a trance.

My brief captivity had affected my health. I was by no means the same man who had got off the Tokyo train at Gawazaki, six days before. I was horrified by what Colonel Yamada had told me, haunted by the vision of the girl I loved pursued like a wild beast through the pine woods, across dangerous rapids, by the still waters of inland lakes.

I had forgotten that I had ever doubted her. It was nothing to me now whether or not she had been a party to the cruel trick that had been played upon me; it was nothing to me whether she had fooled me for some definite purpose, as she had fooled Yamada in Korea. At one time I had a vague idea that from the first the Yashvins had been after the sealed envelope that they somehow knew to be in my possession—though it could only have been by the merest chance that they had got on to the same train at Hiroshima.

I was in no mood for conjectures, to attempt to unravel the problem that had baffled me for days and which I was never likely to solve. I had hard facts upon which to base my actions, and was determined to do what I could, though it seemed to be that I was about to attempt the impossible.

At any cost I must get to this place Hanakura—of which I had never heard before—with as little delay as possible. But I had first to provide myself with a new suit of clothes. I could not run the risk of being arrested a second time as Nikolai Yashvin.

I had no difficulty in finding in the town a tailor who had a stock of ready made clothes for his Japanese clients who were adopting Western fashions. None the less it was no easy matter to find a suit I could get into; and when I went out of the shop, heaven alone knows what I looked like, with a coat so tight that I couldn't button it and trousers that scarcely reached to the top of my boots.

Thus attired I went straight to the railway station in a rickshaw and made inquiries about trains. It appeared that Hanakura was a small station on the branch line between Nara and Kyoto. To get there one had either to go up to Kyoto or south to Osaka on the main line. I discovered that in my case there was practically no difference, as far as time was concerned, between the two routes. The Kyoto route was the shorter, but I

would have to wait some time there for a connection; whereas the express from Yokohama was leaving for Osaka in a few minutes.

No one could tell me whether the Osaka or the Kyoto train would arrive first at Hanakura, as the ordinary passenger service was considerably disorganized owing to right of way being given to the military trains running westward.

Mainly because I was mentally and physically incapable of keeping still for a second, I got into the Osaka train; and it was late in the afternoon when I arrived at the great manufacturing city of central Japan.

I had only a few minutes to wait there for the train to Nara which would take me straight through to Hanakura. That last part of my journey I am never likely to forget.

The train stopped repeatedly at little out-of-the-way stations where never more than two or three native passengers got in or out. I was the only passenger in my compartment, and I had nothing but my own thoughts for company. Looking out of the window, I saw the great hills of Kawachi in the gathering darkness and, wondering where Lilian was, prayed silently to God that she was yet safe.

I pictured those woods alive with patrols of soldiers and gendarmes, searching everywhere for the fugitive, neglecting no possible hiding place, questioning the peasants, again and again picking up her trail like a pack of hungry wolves. And I saw her, too, like a wounded thing, stricken but courageous, footsore and exhausted, but clinging ever to life and hope.

When we were two or three stations past Nara a southbound train passed us. I knew this to be the train from Kyoto that I myself might have caught and, knowing that I had lost at least a quarter of an hour, I cursed my luck and my own impatience.

About seven minutes afterward, when the train drew up at Hanakura, I was half way out of the carriage before it had stopped. There was no one on the platform but the station master and a single passenger who was wearing an overcoat with an astrakan collar.

I was taken past this man, and within a few feet of him, before I could alight; and although it was by then long after sunset, there were stars in a clear sky, and I could not fail to recognize this solitary traveler.

It was the astrakan coat that I had seen on the pier at Moji. And besides, those humped stooping shoulders could belong to no one but Ishida.

AMAZED to see him there, I had no time to ask myself what had brought him to that one village in the whole of Japan—a place of not more than a dozen houses and a native inn that had been built in a spacious garden by the side of a small stream that flowed down into the Yodogawa.

As soon as I was off the train I turned on my heel, went straight up to him and took him so much by surprise that he drew away from me as if I had struck him, and then grasped the handle of his bamboo walking stick.

"Ishida!" I exclaimed.

"You!" said he, and the word was nothing but a gasp. "Norton! What are you doing here? I am on my way now to Osuma. I was going there to identify you, to set you free. I understood you had been arrested as a Russian spy."

"Who told you that?" I asked.

His answer left me dumbfounded.

"Miss Stevenson," said he. "I left you with her at Gawazaki."

A moment elapsed before I could speak. I grasped him roughly by an arm.

"Where is she now?"

I flung the question at him fiercely.

"Here," said he, calm again. "At Hanakura. But she can not stay here. She must go."

I drew away from him and let my arms fall limply, with a sensation as of weakness, the physical manifestation of my utter inability to understand what all this meant.

I looked along the platform and saw the old station master, assisted by the guard of the train, taking several packages out of the luggage van. I suppose the train could not have waited for more than a few minutes; and yet, during that brief space of time my thoughts were legion, thronging my mind like a cloud of restless insects that fly in random circles.

Though I could not explain it, I realized that Sawayanagi Ishida did not yet know, and could not know, the truth —that Lilian Stevenson was Anna Yashvin, a Russian spy.

Throughout all Japan in those days, even in remote mountain villages, there was to be found an inveterate hatred of Russia, a hatred based to some extent upon dread. To every man, woman and child in the whole country the quarrel was a personal one, though not one in a thousand had ever set eyes upon a Russian. I knew well enough what Ishida's feelings were, how he burned to fight for his country, how the deformity that had debarred him from military service—the right and privilege of a *samurai*—had weighed upon him like a curse. And yet this man, but a few minutes before, had been in the company of Anna Yashvin!

"What made you come here?" I asked. "How did you know Miss Stevenson was here?"

"We met by appointment," said he. "She sent me an urgent telegram to come to her at once, to meet her in this place. I saw her only for a few minutes. I must leave now, by this train. It is not safe for me to stay."

I might have asked him what he meant by that, but there were a hundred other things I had to know.

"And Miss Stevenson is safe?" I asked, with all my anxiety in my voice.

"If she is in any danger," he replied, "it is my fault. But you will look after her, I know."

There came a whistle from the engine. The train began to move slowly out of the station. Ishida grasped the handle of the nearest carriage door and opened it.

"But you can't go now!" I exclaimed. "You've told me nothing. Where will I find her?"

"At the inn," said he. "She has not had time to leave. But I am forgetting, I must give you this."

He thrust a hand into the pocket of his coat, and drew forth the very sealed envelope that contained Nikolai Yashvin's written statement that I had received from the hands of Nashimura.

I glanced at it and saw that the seal was still unbroken.

"Who gave you this?" I asked.

"Miss Stevenson herself," said he. "I was to give it into your hands at Osuma. I do so now. She asks for your forgiveness."

I was walking rapidly by the side of the train as it moved away.

"And she sent you to me to save my life!" I exclaimed. "But why are you running away from me?"

At that, before I could say more, he smote himself upon the chest.

"Because this heart is the heart of a *samurai!*" he cried.

I heard the ring of pride in his voice. I saw the gleam of fire in his eyes, before the moving train took him away from me, and he was lost, as he had left me before at Gawazaki. Just a pale face in the darkness.

I STOOD alone on the platform. The old station master was bending down, examining with the help of the lantern the packages he had taken out of the train. His porters had been called up with the reserve, and he was single handed and much too old for the work.

I went up to the old fellow and gave him my ticket, and then asked him the way to the inn. He pointed to a small gate on the other side of the station yard. Passing through the gate, I found myself in a typical Japanese garden.

Winding walks, skirted with rockwork, with here and there a stone pedestal and images of storks and monkeys; an occasional goldfish pond; and there were small streams everywhere across which there

were little bridges that looked incapable of taking the weight of a full grown man.

The evergreens were not dense enough to mask the starlight; and my eyes being accustomed to the semi-darkness, I experienced no difficulty in following the narrow twisting path.

And presently I came upon a kind of summerhouse, the little pavilion that is so common a feature in Oriental gardens. It was hexagonal in shape and built of stone, six round pillars supporting a curved roof of ornamental tiles that were overgrown by tangled wistaria.

As the path led straight to this quaint detached building, I could not fail to look in as I passed—and at once I stopped.

Upon the floor I could see a figure, vague in the shadow, yet unmistakably the figure of a man.

I entered, for some reason or other, on tiptoe, and struck a match.

Going down upon a knee, I held the match downward, so that the flame burned brightly, sheltered from what little wind there was.

I saw a face, a white crooked face that was cold in death.

Holding my breath, I had to assure myself that there was no chance that I could have been mistaken as to this man's identity. It was the same man whom I had seen in the rapids at Gawazaki, who had given evidence against me at Osuma.

I knew now that his name was Kinkozan and that he was the chief secret service agent employed by Colonel Yamada. There was his twisted countenance, with the left eye much higher than the right. The white bandage was still tied about his forehead, and he was wearing the same dark kimono, the front of which was now black with blood.

He had been stabbed to the heart, and he lay there just as he had fallen, with no expression of pain upon his features, one arm extended and his legs crossed.

I rose from my knees and went out into the open air. I asked myself whether all this was not actually a nightmare, whether I had actually seen and spoken to Ishida.

This was the same man who had been sent like a bloodhound on the trail of Lilian. Was it her hand that had killed him?

I went along the pathway, walking subconsciously, my brain in a whirl. Suddenly the lights of the inn itself appeared in front of me among the trees. For some reason or other I dared not go it. I crept stealthily around the building until I had come to a place where one of the panels in the wall had been drawn back. And beyond, within a lighted room, was the girl I loved, whom I had not dared to hope that I would ever see again.

CHAPTER IX

LOYALTY

THE FLOOR of the room, like that of many houses in Japan, stood about three feet above the level of the ground, and against this little wooden wall were creeping plants on trelliswork. Drawing nearer, yet avoiding the light, I breathed her name. I dared not speak above a whisper.

"Lilian!"

The name by which I had known her. To me, it was like a vision, a miracle, to see her there, when I knew the whole province to be teeming with those who were hunting high and low for her—human wolves, sharp eyed and fanged, with all the resources of Western civilization and the fierce ingenuity of savages. I imagined even then that I heard the wires throbbing with news of her whereabouts, orders for her arrest.

In her Japanese kimono she looked more beautiful than ever. She was on her knees on the white matting floor, packing a small handbag into which she was hastily throwing one thing after another.

At the sound of my voice she looked up, surprised, but not frightened. She was so pale that her face was like marble, and there were dark rings around her eyes.

Knowing her danger, the awful suspense she must be suffering, and not wishing to alarm her, I told her who I was, and how I had come to save her if I

could, before I advanced into the light.

"You!" she uttered.

"Yes," said I. "You are not safe in this place. They know you are here. You must fly!"

With her lips a little parted, she stood looking down at me.

"Then you know who I am?" she asked.

"Yes, yes," I answered breathlessly.

"And it has made no difference?"

"None," I cried. "But we have no time to speak of that now. We must think what we can do, where we can go."

Nothing I could say could move her. She stood before me like a statue, as if insensible of her peril.

"They never captured you?" she asked. "I made certain you were a prisoner at Osuma."

"I was," I told her.

"But Ishida can not have got there yet," she faltered. "He left me only now."

She looked about her in a dazed manner. I could see that she was as bewildered as I had been on the station platform when I had spoken to my old friend.

"I managed to convince them that they had got hold of the wrong man," said I. "I came straight to you. I wanted to find you. I never thought I would. And you came to this place at the risk of your own life to save me, to send Ishida to Osuma. I have learnt that from him."

"And it is he who has saved me," she said, in an undertone, as if speaking to herself.

"Do you mean that man there—in the pavilion?" I asked her.

She bowed her head.

"Yes. That is so. For two days he has tracked me, from Uji here, down the valley. He found me tonight just as Ishida came. And Ishida killed him."

"Does Ishida know?" I asked, in a voice that I did not recognize as my own.

So much depended upon my question that I trembled for her answer.

"That I am a Russian and a spy?" she asked, speaking very slowly. "No. He does not know."

"And yet," I exclaimed, "he killed—a secret agent!"

She laughed, though there was no mirth in the ripple of her voice. It was more a cry of pain.

"He found me in that man's arms," she said, "in the little garden house where I was waiting for the train from Kyoto."

"By which I should have come," I took her up. "But tell me more."

"In his arms," she repeated, with a kind of dreamy deliberation. "And Ishida took the man who had come to arrest me, against whom I was struggling, as some unwelcome lover. The irony of it! He heard my cries for help. He who is a patriot above all things! He drew a sword from his stick and ran the man through before my eyes. Killed him—and for me!"

"My God!" I groaned.

"Yes," she said. "Sawayanagi Ishida, the *samurai*. He said it was *bushido*, the spirit of his caste. What he did he did willingly, even gladly. He told me that to the knights of the Tokaido, honor was *bushido*, and that means chivalry."

She stood before me with her hands clasped, her back now to the light of the paper lantern, so that I could not see her features.

I realized that, if she were to be saved, it was I who must save her. She would do nothing for herself.

I climbed into the room, blew out the light in the lantern and took her by the hand.

"MY DEAR," said I, "danger is all around you, and you don't seem to realize it. They are scouring the country for you, and they know you are here. Come, and come quickly! Whatever happens now, I'm with you and will never leave you."

For answer she flung her arms around me. And as she kissed me again and again, I could feel her tears upon my face.

It was love of life and love of me that stirred her suddenly to animation. She had never lacked courage for a moment;

but her powers of resolution had temporarily deserted her.

Freeing herself from my arms, she sprang lightly to the ground, and together we crept away across the garden. We found a gate into the woods and crossed the railroad with the station lights in the distance. Thence we took a footpath that led upward into the pine clad hills.

No one knew that I had come to the place, except Ishida and the old station master. Though the whole country had been warned to keep a sharp lookout for her, I felt that so long as we were together, among the mountains and the waterfalls, in the darkness of the woods, we would be safe for the time being, at any rate.

Unfortunately I knew nothing of the neighborhood; and even with my knowledge of the Japanese language, I could not see how I was to get her out of the country.

For more than an hour we walked on and on, not knowing whither we went, forever gaining higher ground from which we could see the starlight reflected upon silent, mirrorlike lakes.

Then the wind got up, and in that high altitude cut like a knife, numbing our limbs. By the merest chance I found a little cave, and there we crept for shelter.

It was as if we had gone back centuries through the passage of time, back to the days of our primitive ancestors, with whom danger was part and parcel of life. With the wind howling among the mountaintops around us, holding her in my arms, and thanking God that I had found her, I listened to her story.

The day after Anna Yashvin and her brother had got safely away from the inn at Gawazaki, there had happened something in the nature of a climax in the lives of two people who had been the greatest of comrades, sharing common dangers. Nikolai had awakened his sister in the middle of the night, telling her in a whisper that they must escape at once, that there was no time to lose.

She was dressed in three minutes; and by that time he had got a couple of rickshaws down from the village. Their only chance was to make as many miles as they could before daylight came. If they could get to Kobe, he thought they would be safe. They could lose themselves in the European population; and as no passports were necessary, they ought to have no difficulty in getting on board some foreign ship. The Messageries Maritimes, the Canadian Pacific and Norddeutcher Lloyd, all called at Kobe; and any ship, bound east or west, would offer a safe asylum.

Together they left the inn on tiptoe, almost the most dangerous part of the whole business, with the painted matting on the floor that creaked like wickerwork, and the thin paper walls.

She found her brother outside with the two rickshaws. It was pitch dark and there was a cold wind that threatened snow. She could see nothing of Nikolai, but his tall figure, clad in a dark blue mackintosh with the collar turned up well over his ears. The two rickshaw coolies were oldish men who had not been called up for the war, who laughed at the idea that they couldn't cover ten miles before sunrise. At a steady jogtrot they took the road, which fortunately was downhill most of the way. Anna went first, her brother following at a distance of about thirty yards, so that there was little. chance of conversation.

At each halt Yashvin had kept the two coolies up to the mark by giving them more yen than they had ever handled in their lives; and by nine o'clock they had struck the main road between Osaka and Kyoto. Yashvin insisted upon a short cut to Kobe across the hills. He wanted to pay off the coolies and get fresh men, and naturally enough preferred to do this in some out-of-the-way village where there was no telephone communication with Osuma.

By midday they had reached a place called Kamaki—a few houses and a Shinto temple under leafless maple trees upon a ridge that overlooked terraced rice fields. At the inn there the landlord bowed himself in half upon receiving the first

European guests that had ever come his way. Though he could give them nothing but the simplest Japanese fare, they had a room to themselves, according to the custom of the country, where they were served with sponge cakes, bean soup, and those thin biscuits that are called *sembei* and taste of nothing at all.

By that time Anna—though she had eaten nothing for twelve hours—had no appetite for the delicacies on the little lacquer tray. Though Nikolai had not taken off his mackintosh, she had seen the suit he was wearing, and recognized it as mine.

Staring in horrified amazement at her brother, she said nothing for a long time. She reasoned it all out—that I had been left behind as a decoy.

She could do her brother but this justice: he had admitted that he wasn't exactly proud of what he had done, though he tried the old argument that the ends justified the means. To save his own life, and his sister's too, he declared that he had had to find a scapegoat. All he wanted was time in which to get away, whilst he did me the compliment to suggest that a man so well known in the country as myself should experience no difficulty in establishing his innocence.

Anna had doubted that. She knew the Japanese. And her brother, failing to calm her fears, felt personally affronted when she openly defied him.

For she swore to him that he was free to save his own life, and in what manner he wished, but she would never set foot upon the deck of a neutral ship, until she knew that I was safe.

Nikolai must have known that, if she stayed in the country, the odds would be a thousand to one against her. On that account he found himself between the devil and the deep sea—the doom meted out to a spy and the devil of a woman who was determined to have her own way. Reluctant to leave her to her fate, he declared with Russian vehemence that, rather than do that, he would shoot himself.

She laughed that idea out of him. Suicide wouldn't profit him or herself or Russia. On the other hand, if he remained with her, they would both be arrested for a certainty within twenty-four hours. Single handed, she thought she had a chance. She had at least one friend to whom she knew she could go; and that was Ishida who in the train had given her his address in Yokohama. Ishida would be able to identify me, if the worst had come to the worst. Nikolai could surely rely upon her not to mismanage things. By way of a compliment, she reminded him that she had learnt her business in a good school.

HE HAD made arrangements in Kamaki for a relay of rickshaws to take them into Kobe that night. But, even then, he couldn't make up his mind to go without her, until the landlord innocently informed them that a military patrol had suddenly arrived in the neighborhood.

They took this news calmly enough, as information that didn't concern them. But they found an excuse to clear off within ten minutes, taking the same road for the first few miles, Anna then going back to the Tokaido, whilst her brother kept to the mountains, so that he could come down into Kobe well after dark from the north.

However, by that time, another bone of contention had arisen between them. They had it out at the place where they had halted at the road, where the path that Anna was to take led to the left, down the steep hillside to the Sanyo Railway.

The wind had changed. It was twenty degrees warmer than the previous day. There was a clear sky, and the water of Izumi-Nada in the distance, above the factory chimneys of Osaka, was cobalt blue and smooth as a mill pond. In the air was the first call of spring, something that heralded the coming blaze of cherry blossom, the new green of the trees, the summer carnival of color—irises, wistaria, azaleas by the wayside.

There was something tragic in their

parting. Though they may have quarreled, they loved each other, and there was more than a chance that they would never meet again.

Nikolai was ready enough to be sentimental. A very different man now from the monocled Englishman in the Tokyo train. A quivering lip, an unusual awkwardness about him, the very fact that he hadn't even the pluck to look Anna in the face, all showed her only too plainly that for him this was a wrench.

Very tenderly he took her in his arms and kissed her. He was about to make another attempt to dissuade her, when she silenced him with a finger on his lips. And it was then, as they embraced, that they discovered Nashimura's precious document, sewn in the lining of my coat that Yashvin was wearing.

He had carried it all this time without having found it. It was left to the girl to do that. As she withdrew her arms from around him, her hands rested for a moment upon his chest, and she asked him what it was.

He had not the remotest idea himself, until they had moved away from the two rickshaw coolies, who sat panting by the roadside, and ripped open the lining. And then the envelope didn't tell him much, except that I had taken the trouble to scribble my own name on the back of it in pencil.

Yashvin himself was all for breaking the seal. According to him, all was grist that came to the mill of a spy; and he reminded his sister that, although I may have been a neutral, for many years I had been employed by the Japanese government.

But Anna had ideas of her own. Whatever the envelop contained was confidential, or I would never have hidden it inside the lining of my coat. In defending that letter, she told me that she felt she was defending me. In God's name, she declared to Nikolai, had he not already wronged me enough? She never minced her words; if what he had done was cowardly, what he then proposed to do was mean. If he was leaving the country, as he was compelled to do, she would undertake to deliver the letter safely, through Ishida.

And in the end he let her have her own way. He may never have guessed the truth, that I was more to her than a friend.

I felt the sudden pressure of her hand, when she told me that Nikolai had even prayed when he left her, the first time he had prayed for years. His own personal danger had never awakened any reverence in him. He had made of adventure a business, and was master of his trade.

I realized that no man could be so calmly audacious without being to some extent callous and wanting in sympathy. It seems that all his finer feelings had been centered around his sister. And that was why he had prayed, silently, sitting in the rickshaw trundling along the uneven, country roadway, past the images and shrines that stand like sentinels upon the inaccessible heights of Kabutoyama.

When they had parted she did not once look back—she was made of sterner stuff. Bolt upright in the little man drawn cart, she sat staring straight in front of her, conscious that she had been hurled into the melting pot of Fate.

CHAPTER X

THE BLOODHOUND

I DID not hear the whole of Anna's story upon the night when we lay in hiding in the cave high up in the Kawachi mountains. For in the midst of her narrative she fell asleep in my arms and slumbered like a child till daybreak came.

I remember my own mingled feelings—a kind of splendid joy in the dangers that we shared; sanguine hopes that by some miracle she might escape; and sheer terror when I came to realize what little chance we had.

When morning broke I was hard put to it to think what could be done. There was clear crystal water to drink in a neighboring spring, but neither she nor I had any food.

Knowing that it would not be safe for her to be seen in daylight, even by the peasants, I told her to remain in the cave, whilst I spied out the land. I undertook to obtain something to eat and to find out, if I could, whether any military or police patrols had been seen in the district.

I knew that I was taking a risk; for the station master may have reported that I had got off the Nara train at Hanakura, and it must have been known by then that at about that time Anna had disappeared from the inn, where the body of Kinkozan must have been found.

I knew, too, that this man's death would very soon set the whole countryside by the ears and that, if we were to escape, we must do so the following night under cover of darkness.

In a remote mountain village, a few scattered houses around a picturesque old water mill, I pretended that I was on a walking tour across the mountain from Gifu, though I had no knapsack on my back to prove it. Here I succeeded in buying some cooked rice and a few eggs, with which I returned to the cave. I had not been able to discover if parties of police had been seen in the valley.

At the back of the cave we succeeded in making a fire upon which we roasted our eggs. During the day, when we never ventured out of our hiding place, Anna told me the rest of her story; and though she had little more to relate, it was her adventures from the time she left Uji to the moment when I had discovered her at Hanakura that so moved me that, from that day to this, I have worshipped the very ground she walks on.

For she had faced these dangers, she had calmly and deliberately put her head into the dragon's mouth for my sake. It was that thought which filled me with shame that even for a moment I could have thought ill of her.

After she had parted from her brother, it was late in the afternoon when she had come down from the hills into the valley of the Yodogawa. She had decided to telegraph at once to Ishida, and had selected the telegraph office at Uji, a town on a branch railway visited by a good many tourists, where she would not be likely to attract undue attention. She realized that it would be madness for her to attempt to travel all the way to Yokohama. At every railway station on the main line the police would have orders to look out for her, and she could never hope to get through without being questioned.

She proposed to ask Ishida to meet her at Hanakura where—her guidebook informed her—there was a solitary native inn.

The sun was setting when she passed the great powder magazines by the bridge at Uji. Where the country was not laid out in tea plantations there were ridges and great rocks overtopped by ancient trees, amongst which here and there could be seen the glazed roof of a temple or the famous wooden Phoenix Hall with its painted columns, dedicated to the Nine Regions of the Buddhist Heaven.

Making inquiries, she found her way to the post office where she took into her confidence a Japanese clerk who could speak English tolerably well. He took her word for it that she was an American girl who had come down from Kyoto, and asked her if the United States was on the side of Japan.

Without a second's hesitation she had vouched for the sincerity of President Roosevelt, to the unqualified delight of the clerk, who assured her that her telegram would reach Yokohama that evening. A rapid calculation advised her that she would have at least twenty-four hours to wait, before Ishida could arrive at Hanakura. In the meantime she must find somewhere to spend the night, where no questions would be asked.

There were two good inns in Uji where tourists frequently stayed, and of these she selected the Yorozu-ya on the Kyoto side of the river, where she paid off her rickshaw man, to be greeted by a smiling landlord and five bowing *nesan* who received her as if she were a goddess.

Unlike a goddess, she was subjected all that night to what was little less than mental torture, as well as considerable physical discomfort. The *futon* was uncomfortable, the inn cold, and although everything was spotlessly clean, scores of gigantic fleas emerged from the matting to devour her in the darkness.

But, even if it had not been for all this, her mental anxiety would not have allowed her to sleep. She wondered whether Ishida would really come on the morrow, what was happening to me in Osuma, and whether her brother had already got safely away from Kobe. From the way she spoke, I saw that her own danger had never once come into her calculations. That was part and parcel of the trade she had followed for seven years, that had always been an adventure, that was now more glorious than ever, because it was war.

Voices in the night had caused her to sit up and listen, to throw the quilt from off her. A passing light in the passage without threw the shadow of a man upon the paper wall. With sandaled feet he moved, soft of foot, to the entrance of the inn, and there stood talking for a long time to some one in a whisper. Strung up as she was, those whispering voices frightened her.

Very quietly she got to her feet, walked on tiptoe to the wall, and drew back one of the panels no more than half an inch, enough to allow her to see into the passage. Opposite her was the bathroom of the inn—a great stone tank that could be heated by a furnace underneath, where half a dozen natives of both sexes would bathe at the same time, in spite of the new police regulations. Past this was the entrance hall; and there a lamp had been lighted, where a strange, sinister looking man stood talking to the landlord.

HE WORE a kimono, and a felt hat pulled down over his ears, and in one of his hands he carried a heavy walking stick, a thing that looked like a bludgeon. Under the brim of his hat she could see a white bandage that had been tied across his forehead, and beneath this all his features were crooked. In a word, she gave me an accurate description of the man I knew to be Kinkozan, Yamada's agent, who had just arrived from Osuma.

Though she could not understand grammatical Japanese, she could not fail to overhear one or two words, every syllable distinct with the peculiar staccato pronunciation of the Japanese. And of these it was one word that caused her to hold her breath, to wait listening to the beating of her heart. It was her own surname, "Yashvin."

Softly closing the panel, she crept back to her *futon* where she sat cold as ice. Never before, she assured me, had her courage been so tried. Never before had there been so much at stake. This man was on her track. She was like a hunted animal.

At last, all was still again. The stranger had left the inn. The landlord came shuffling along the passage on his way back to bed.

She had never felt so lonely. In the silence and darkness, she tried to make up her mind. She realized that it would be useless to flee. She would only be followed and caught and would fail in her object. Somehow or other, she would have to brazen it out, deny all knowledge of Nikolai and Anna Yashvin. Even if Ishida came to her, she must never tell him the truth. She knew that these people were capable of putting patriotism before everything. She could not trust Ishida to protect her once he knew who she was.

The following morning a Japanese breakfast was brought to her in her room; an omelet, biscuits and green tea. No questions were asked. The *nesan* were inquisitive only about her clothes and the whiteness of her skin. The landlord did not appear. It was just as if nothing unusual had happened during the night.

Bright sunshine brought her new confidence. It was as if the spring had come suddenly. She had decided to go out on the pretext of visiting the Buddhist

temple of Byodo-in, and chartered a rickshaw to take her to Uji's chief sight, with no intention of returning to the inn where she left the little baggage she had with her, with the exception of a light handbag in which she had my sealed envelop, her guidebook and a Japanese kimono.

Outside, she noticed two gendarmes, officious little uniformed men who pretended not to notice her and then watched her rickshaw down the street. At the temple she paid off the rickshaw coolie, and sat down by the side of the lotus pond. Her idea was to walk to Hanakura through the woods. The village was about ten miles farther down the valley, but she had practically the whole day before her.

She could scarcely lose her way, as she had only to follow the course of the river. The road was a narrow path that might have been in fairyland, dappled with sunlight beneath the overhanging branches of cryptomerias. She passed many people, most of them women and old men employed on the tea plantations, who saluted her and wished her an august good morning.

It was afternoon when she came out of the woods and looked down upon the little village of Hanakura. Going straight to the inn, she engaged a room and made inquiries of the old landlady concerning the trains from Kyoto.

She was told that nearly all traffic was late, but there were four trains arriving daily from Kyoto from the east. The first was due at midday, but the connection with that had already gone down the branch line to Nara. If the American lady was expecting a friend on the Yokohama train, he could certainly not arrive until after six o'clock.

She then asked what would be the best route from the village to Osuma, and was told that it would be advisable to take the Nara train back to Kyoto; it generally passed the other south of Hanakura. This, it will be remembered, was the very train upon which I happened to arrive.

WITH this news Anna had some reason to be satisfied. She had heard all she wanted to know. She might expect Ishida some time after six o'clock; and, if all went well, he could leave a few minutes later for Osuma with the object of setting me at liberty and giving into my hands the sealed envelop she had got from her brother.

With a sense of relief, she had noticed that there was no telephone at the inn. If the people there showed signs of being suspicious, she might at least have time to get away. Concerning her future she had made no definite plans.

The inn was under the management of a middle aged, care worn woman whose husband had been called up from the reserve, who deplored the hard times and informed Anna that there was only one other guest in the establishment, who had arrived earlier in the afternoon.

She was thankful for this, although the guests in a Japanese inn need never meet one another, unless they assemble in the common room to listen to a traveling story teller. She was conducted to the apartment that had been allotted to her by a diminutive *nesan* who could not have been more than fourteen years old. To get to this room it was necessary to pass along a balcony that overlooked the gardens; and by the time she had reached her destination, she felt that she might faint. It was as if she were drowning, as if she felt the weight of many waters closing in upon her; she was strengthless and exhausted—and there was no help within miles of her.

She could not reply to the *nesan's* "please-excuse-me's." All she could say was "*Mada kimemasen*—I have not yet decided." Impatiently she waved the little girl away, for she wanted only to be left alone.

For she had looked into one of the adjacent rooms as she passed along the veranda, a room in which one of the panels had been half drawn back. And she had seen therein the figure of a man, wearing a kimono, seated cross legged on the

ground by the side of a *hibachi*, smoking a cigaret. And it had been the man with the crooked face and the white bandage across his forehead—Kinkozan, the human bloodhound who had followed her from Uji.

CHAPTER XI

BUSHIDO

IT WAS all up with her now. She knew that. Even if Ishida could save me, she herself could never hope to escape.

She told herself that she might have known that the Japanese would prove too clever for her. Their secret service system was admirable. A nation of conjurors. And everything had been done so quietly. It was as if an invisible net had been drawn in upon her from every side, yet no one had accosted her; she had never been questioned.

She had a sense of being imprisoned within those thin, paper walls, a feeling that a hundred eyes were always watching her. She sat quite still for a long time, as if numbed. The shadows, like a slow, incoming tide, were spreading from the woods. The valley was buried in the red of sunset.

When she consulted her wrist watch she saw to her surprise that the Kyoto train was already due. And at once a feeling of desperation acted upon her like a physical tonic. The very fact that she had now something definite to do gave her resolution

If Ishida were on the train, clearly he could not come to the inn. But there was a path through the gardens from the railway station, and halfway down this was the pavilion, the creeper clad summer house, where she might await her friend, if she could leave the inn unseen.

On tiptoe she crept along the veranda, away from the room in which sat that silent and terrible man, like the effigy of some bandaged heathen god. She hoped that it would now be dark enough for her to pass unseen across the garden.

She found some wooden steps that led to the path she wanted, and as soon as she was hidden from view behind the shrubberies and rockwork, she set off running as fast as she could. There was no need for haste; she knew that. But she had wanted to get away, to breathe. Action stimulated her courage, warmed the blood in her veins.

Safe in the pavilion, she waited, watching the darkness gather. The surrounding objects had become very vague and indistinct when, without a sound, the figure of a man appeared upon the threshold of the pavilion—a man who bowed low, but said nothing.

She had turned to fly when she was grasped roughly by a wrist, and to her horror and amazement was addressed in her own language—Russian.

"I think not, Mademoiselle Yashvin!"

That was all. She had no answer to give, nothing to say. She could see nothing in the dim light but the white bandage across the forehead of her captor, who went on talking in the same emotionless voice.

"Your brother tried to kill me; but the gods were on the side of Japan, as they will always be. I was not seriously hurt, just stunned. I have orders to take you to Nara."

She was too terrified to think. All her resolution failed her.

"Why have you not arrested me before?" she asked, in a voice without strength.

Though she could not see him, she knew that he was smiling.

"I had to make quite sure," said he. "It would not do to offend innocent tourists."

As he was speaking, she heard the roar of an engine in the distance, a whistle, the rattle of a train.

Though she did not listen to him, he went on talking. She had no idea what he was talking about. All her attention was taken up by the train, the lighted windows of which she could see from the open pavilion.

Upon the platform figures were moving to and fro. She could even hear voices.

And then another whistle, the strained snorting of the engine as it began to move away, continuing its journey.

A space of time elapsed that, to her, was like eternity. She stood rigid, straining her eyes in the darkness, listening to every sound. Kinkozan still held her by a wrist.

She heard the click of the little gate that she knew to be at the end of the garden, and then, footsteps, halting, uncertain footsteps, drawing nearer on the pathway.

She acted upon impulse, prompted solely by the faculty of self-preservation. She had to take two risks—first, that the man who approached might prove to be Ishida; second, that the people in the inn would not hear her cries.

She struggled to free herself from the man's grasp which tightened on her wrist like the grip of a vise. She had no other idea than to attempt to escape, and was at once made to realize the futility of that. Kinkozan, though by no means a big man, had strength far greater than her own. She was whipped from off her feet, grasped so strongly that her arms were pinned to her sides and the breath half crushed out of her.

It was then she cried out for help. Frantically she continued to struggle, until she was thrown violently upon the stone floor of the pavilion.

SHE LAY there, bruised, breathless, to be suddenly blinded by a flash of light. The widening beam from a powerful electric torch was flashed first upon her own face and then upon that of her assailant.

She called upon Ishida by name. He stood there in his astrakan coat, with his hunched, deformed shoulders, his bamboo walking stick under an arm, staring at the girl who implored him to save her.

An infuriated, indignant, and moreover a jealous, lover does not ask for explanations. The whole thing was over in two seconds. In the light of the torch the thin blade of a sword shot forth from its bamboo sheath, and passed straight and clean into the heart of Kinkozan.

Sawayanagi Ishida, the *samurai*, stood before her. The electric torch had fallen to the ground, and the light, reflected from the white stone flooring, dimly illumined the interior of the pavilion.

Ishida, the deformed scion of the *bushi*, in whom was the chivalry of the knights errant of the old Tokaido. For all his astrakan coat and his starched collar and cuffs, he was essentially of the East. His face was expressionless. His features betrayed neither wrath nor horror, nothing but a kind of grim satisfaction at what he had done. And the blood streamed from his sword.

He spoke in English.

"I have shame," said he, bowing, "that one of my countrymen should treat you thus."

She got to her feet and stood swaying. Her hair had become disheveled. Even then she retained her presence of mind. She picked up the torch from the floor and switched off the light, leaving them in darkness. She could see nothing at all; and for that she was glad.

"This is terrible!" she said. "What are you to do? I never dreamed that this could happen."

"That I should defend your honor?" he asked. "It may seem strange to you, but I would die in defense of it."

Alarm took hold of her—not for her own sake, but for his. She stood listening. She could hear nothing. Both the railway station and the inn, save for a few lights, might have been deserted. Apparently her cries for help had not been heard.

"You must get away from this place!" she exclaimed. "You must as quickly as you can! Oh, forgive me! I am not worth it."

"Let me, please, be judge of that," he answered. "I dared not tell you in the train. I had no opportunity, and besides, please excuse me, but we belong to so different races. But I have been thinking of you often—so much—"

"Do not speak of that now!" she cut

him short. "You must think of only one thing—how to get away from here. This can not be kept secret. The Kyoto train is due in a few minutes. You must escape. Why should any one know that you have ever been here?"

He waited a moment before he answered, as if he were thinking about something.

"I am very sorry," he said at last. "I am sorry that you should not let me speak what is in my heart. I wanted so much to see you again. That is why I gave you my address in Yokohama. I received your telegram, and I came willingly, yes, gladly."

She groaned.

"To commit murder!" she said.

"The knights of the Tokaido were not murderers," he answered. "To them honor was *bushido*, and that means chivalry. With such ideals life and death count for nothing. No such man fears for the consequences of his actions. Have you not heard of the mountain god who who was called Dorokujin, who waited for centuries for the goddess, Benten. They say that he is waiting for her still, wandering in the mountains to provide honorable safety for all wayfarers. You have condescended to be kinder to me than Benten was to poor Dorokujin. You have asked me to come to you, and I have come. But why did you send for me?"

"Not for myself," she answered. "For another, a friend of yours."

"What friend of mine?" he asked.

"Mr. Norton, who left the train with my brother and myself at Gawazaki. He is in grave danger. He has been arrested as a Russian spy and is now at Osuma. Some one must go there at once to establish his innocence. No one can do that better than you. And when you see him give him this," she went on. "This envelope belongs to him. I do not know what it contains. And ask him to forgive me."

"I will remember," he bowed.

"That letter may be important," she added. "It may help to prove his identity. But you must leave at once. Even now you may not arrive at Osuma in time."

"And you will come with me?" he asked.

That brought her face to face with the impossibility of the situation in which she found herself. She was lost. There was no way of escape for her. She could not go with him to Kyoto, because he would learn the truth as soon as he got to Osuma, even if she were not arrested before. On the other hand, if she stayed behind at Hanakura, what evidence had she to prove that she herself had not murdered the man who had dogged her footsteps all the way from Gawazaki? Nor could she clear herself without convicting Ishida.

And yet she had to give him an answer. One thing she dreaded even more than death. Somehow, she could not face Ishida when he had learnt that she was the enemy of his country. She felt now that she had to save him, to save him both from shame and the consequence of his own rashness—what he had called *bushido*.

She made up her mind at once.

"I must stay here," she said.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "After what has happened."

She addressed him as one who gives orders, as if it were she who had taken charge of the situation.

"Go to Osuma," she said. "Take the necessary steps to establish Mr. Norton's identity. Then do what you can to insure your own safety. So far as I am concerned, no one shall ever know that you have ever been to Hanakura.

"And what of you?" he asked.

"I am going away from here, but not by train. You must not be seen with me. That would throw you under suspicion."

"Because of that man?" he asked, pointing to the dead body on the floor.

"Yes," she said. "Because of him."

"Who was he?"

"I do not know," she answered. "He has followed me for days."

No more than the truth, and yet a

statement well calculated to give him a wholly wrong impression.

How she hated herself! She seemed somehow to have lost caste. Had the aristocracy of Russia, she asked herself, nothing that corresponded to *bushido?* This man was an Asiatic; in all probability he had no religion, and yet he was gallant, chivalrous, strong. He feared nothing. He regretted nothing. It was his privilege, as a noble of Japan, to defend and protect the oppressed, and he asked for no greater mission.

She again heard the roar of steam, the grinding of brakes, as the train from Nara came to a halt.

"You must run!" she cried. "Be quick."

He bowed low to her, so low that his deformity made him look like some strange four footed animal.

"*Sayonara de gozaimasu,*" said he. "Perhaps, some day, we meet again."

At that he was gone, through the little gateway into the station yard. As for the girl, she hastened back to her room in the inn, where I found her a few minutes afterward, when she had donned her Japanese kimono and was hurriedly packing her bag.

CHAPTER XII

NARA

I HEARD Anna's narrative in fragments. By the end of that day she had told me all in a disjointed manner, answering such questions as occurred to me, remembering first one incident and then another. Her adventures, whilst I was imprisoned at Osuma, I have related in the true sequence of events, from the time when she left me at Gawazaki to when I found her in the inn at Hanakura.

It may be too much, perhaps, for me to expect anyone to realize the effect her story had upon me—admiration for her courage and her strength of mind; when I thought of the trials she had endured, a feeling of sympathy toward her that can not be described; and above all, the realization of the fact that she had given everything for me, that she had voluntarily accepted the very dangers that now threatened her, solely on my account. It may be that the last touched most deeply the vanity of man; but I know that that day in the cave among the Kawachi hills crowned my love for her.

I gave her confidence that I was far from feeling myself. She saw that with such resolution as I had I was determined to save her if humanly possible.

I had made my plans. I knew that our only hope lay in reaching one of the treaty ports. Of these Kobe was of course the nearest; and for that very reason, and because it was the most obvious route for her to take, it would be in consequence the most dangerous.

On that account I had conceived an ambitious project. The very magnitude of the thing seemed to me to offer us our best chance, and I honestly believe that, had we got safely past Nara, all would have ended well.

My idea was that, traveling only by night, we should work our way by stages along the great watershed of the peninsula that lies between Osaka and Owari Bays until we reached the coast. As we should naturally avoid the more important towns, for several days we would be compelled to undergo undoubted hardships, whilst civilized food would be hard to obtain. But in some small fishing village to the south of Nagashima, we should be able to charter a native craft that would take us along the coast to Yokohama, where there would be no need for Anna to go ashore. Once I had deposited her on board a neutral passenger ship, she would be out of danger.

I had more than enough money for my purpose, since everything had been given back to me on my release at Osuma, and I saw no reason why my plan should not succeed, provided Anna—who could never hope to pass herself off as a Japanese—was never seen in my company by day.

We set out that evening as soon as it was dark, climbing downward among the pine trees in the moonlight. The country was so broken and hilly that footpaths

were hard to find; and, having no guide, I had to trust to the stars, the general configuration of the country and the direction of the streams.

At about eight o'clock we came to a small village where we struck a roadway that we thought would be safe to follow; but, before we had gone half a mile upon this, we were surprised by a military guard consisting of four men and a sergeant.

With my heart in my mouth, I had to answer a score of questions; and it was only my intimate knowledge of the people and the language that made me think I had saved the situation.

None the less we took to the hills after that; and by ten o'clock, when we were somewhere in the neighborhood of Nara, Anna was too footsore and weary to go a step farther.

I found a place where she could rest among the pines and insisted upon her taking what little food I had left, though we dared not light a fire to cook the eggs. Leaving her asleep upon the ground, and knowing that we must have more food for the following day, I left her and went down into a village where I had seen a light.

When I returned she was gone. We had been followed every inch of the way, from the time when we had left the patrol. When I was down in the village, bargaining with an old farmer for as much rice as I could stuff into the pockets of my coat, Anna had been awakened by the flash of a lantern in her face.

Sitting up, as soon as her eyes had become accustomed to the glare, she realized all was lost. Shoulder to shoulder, squatting in front of her, like the three monkey gods who are called *sambikizaru*, were three Japanese gendarmes. Little grinning men with long swords, hats that didn't fit them and uniforms too tight.

As for myself, I was like a man possessed when I realized what had happened. Regardless of my own safety, not caring what happened to me, I went straight down into Nara, running like a madman, and there I learned the truth.

I WAS filled with consternation when I heard not only that Colonel Yamada was himself in the place, but that Anna had been actually accused of the murder of Kinkozan at Hanakura. Pretending to be no more than inquisitive and making the best use of my knowledge of the Japanese language with the correct honorific expressions, I heard with horror that Anna had been lodged for the remainder of the night in a police cell that was strongly guarded.

I knew that summary justice would be meted out to her without waste of time. I knew, too, that Yamada had reasons of his own for getting rid of her. It appeared that there was something sardonic in the character of this little wizened Japanese warrior. He would now square his account with the girl who had fooled him seven years before, at the very place where stands the mystery tree to which native lovers are wont to tie their written vows and prayers.

Though it was then nearly midnight several people were abroad; and I had no difficulty in discovering that Colonel Yamada was staying as a guest at the Musashino Inn.

That was all I wanted to know. That man and I were to have it out together; and I had within the pocket of my coat the only weapon with which I could hope to fight him with any chance of success, the sealed envelope, containing Nikolai Yashvin's confession that I had been given by Ishida. Since I had received it from the dying Nashimura, it had passed through so many hands that I felt there was some strange and mystic fatality connected with those words that I had never read, written years before upon the old Korean hills.

In former days Nara had been one of the principal cities of Japan; and the little place still thrived on something of her former glory, the revival of religious festivals, the fame of her ancient Shinto temples.

It was pitch dark and the moon had set, when I crossed the little stream to the

shops of the makers of toy figures of those who perform the *No* dances. I had often visited the place before, at the time of the wistaria, or the maples, or when the stone lanterns are lighted on either side of the avenue that leads through the green trees to the Temple of Song. Beyond the town I could see the dark maple clad slopes of Mikasa, standing forth against a sky that was cold as steel.

As I walked, a great change came over me. I was neither excited nor apprehensive. I was deliberate in everything I did.

I went straight to the Musashino Inn, where I ordered a room. To allay suspicion, I asked for food, selecting such native dishes as I knew to be palatable, dishes made up of fish and chicken, whilst I drank cup after cup of *sake*. The bitter, fermented liquor warmed my blood, brought a flush to my cheeks. I was amazed at my appetite, until I remembered that I had had no decent food for three days.

The *nesan* who attended me was ready enough to gossip. Her method of doing her hair signified that she was a married woman, and with more pride than anxiety she admitted that her husband had gone to the war. Did not the honorable American gentleman condescend to think that the armies of Japan would prove invincible? Were not the sons of Nippon the greatest warriors on earth? The Musashino Inn was greatly honored that night, since the august General Yamada himself had deigned to pay them a visit. He occupied the room at the other corner of the building. It was the best room in the house, because there the veranda supported a beautiful wistaria tree, older than the inn itself. In a good season this tree had as many as five hundred pendant blooms, as blue as the sky beyond the crest of Fuji upon an August morning.

So prattled the *nesan*, whilst seated Japanese fashion, cross-legged on the matting floor, I smoked one native cigaret after another, until the *hibachi* was half filled with the round cardboard mouthpieces.

And even when I was left alone, I sat quite still for a long time and never moved, as impassive as an image of the Buddha. I heard the rattle of a railway train that arrived at and left the station. The sound conveyed nothing to me, made no impression upon my thoughts.

With the same deliberate calmess, as if I had absorbed from the East something of the capacity to conceal deep seated emotions, I got to my feet, walked along the passage to the other side of the inn, and drew aside the framed paper doorway by the wistaria tree. It led to the room occupied by an august and distinguished guest.

CHAPTER XIII

A MATTER OF BUSINESS

COLONEL YAMADA had discarded his military uniform. Wearing a kimono, he sat smoking a little bamboo tobacco pipe with a brass bowl. The *nesan* had tidied up the room, in which there was no ornament but a single vase in a recess and a *kakemono* bearing an inscription in Chinese characters, a quotation from the Century of Poets. The supper things had been taken away; the *futon* had not been brought.

The colonel, though he showed surprise at seeing me, expressed no annoyance that I should prove so lacking in good manners as to enter unannounced. Bowing, he suggested that he should order refreshments.

"I would not encroach upon your hospitality," said I.

"Why are you here?" he asked. "I left you in Osuma."

"A matter of business," said I.

"Business!" he exclaimed. "I have no business beyond my duty to Japan."

"Compared to which, I take it, your own personal honor counts for nothing?"

He never moved a muscle.

"My honor and the welfare of my country are one and the same thing," he replied.

I was in no mood to beat about the bush.

"That was not so," I answered, "seven years ago, in Korea. I come to speak of Nikolai Yashvin, the real Nikolai Yashvin, Anna Yashvin's brother. I know what happened in Fusan."

He never winced at the word. He sat motionless, his hands folded in his lap, his little dark eyes fixed steadfastly upon me.

"Please condescend to explain," said he.

"You may as well know the worst," I went on. "I told you in Osuma that the man who has been blackmailing you for seven years is dead. But I did not tell you that with his last breath he repented —not of having extorted money from you, but of having played the traitor. From him I received Yashvin's document which I was charged to deliver into the hands of the commander-in-chief."

Yamada bowed his head, the action of a man who submits to Destiny.

"It is well," said he. "This is the end. And my whole soul was in my work. Whatever I may have done in the past, there is no one in Japan today more loyal at heart than I. Is it not strange," he asked, with a kind of sickly smile, "that one's sins should find one out after so many years? But why have you come to me?"

"Because, as I have said," I replied, "I have an eye to business. I consider the life of a living and a noble girl of greater value than the last request of a dying man."

The colonel looked up. His little eyes were like bright beads.

"I see," he said slowly. "After all, you are a confederate of Anna Yashvin's. This is dangerous work. You are unarmed. I am not."

Slipping a hand into the folds of his kimono, he produced from under the sash that was tied around his waist a nickel plated revolver.

I smiled. I felt that I could not more aptly express my complete self-confidence, my consciousness of the security of my position.

"And besides," he went on, as if striving in vain to get the moral advantage on his side, "I have only to summon assistance and order your arrest."

"That I may be searched by the police?" I asked. "I think not. Remember, they would find upon me Yashvin's letter, in which is given a full account of his escape from the military guardroom in Fusan, how Major Yamada —as you were then—supplied him with the very file with which he cut through his prison bars. Also, you are not to forget that I knew Nashimura personally. He was one of my employees. As before, I can soon clear myself of any charge that is brought against me of being a Russian spy."

"Then why are you interested in this woman?"

"That is my affair."

"Ha!" he cried. "She would fool you, as she once fooled me!"

"Again you are wrong," I answered. "Had it not been that my life was in danger, she would have succeeded before now in getting safely out of this country, as her brother appears to have done."

The colonel nodded as in approval. I saw that he was a man of the quickest intelligence.

"Though I think I can guess the suggestion you are going to make," said he, "I can do nothing for you, nothing for myself."

"That remains to be seen," I went on. "You may serve your country the better by neglecting your duty. This happens to be one of those rare occasions on which two wrongs may make a right. The girl is no real menace in herself. She accompanied her brother as a blind, to convey the impression everywhere they went that they were merely English tourists. As for you, Colonel, why should you sacrifice your career unnecessarily? You have only to hand the prisoner over to me, and I promise faithfully that she will leave Japan at once, and you shall receive in exchange for her freedom—the document in my possession. Your secret will be safe. Nashimura, as I've told you, is dead."

HE WAITED a long time before he answered. His features were inscrutable; his voice, when he spoke, toneless, as if he were weary.

"What you say might be possible," he replied, "if the prisoner were charged only with espionage. You are mistaken when you think her harmless. She is accused of having murdered with her own hands the secret service agent who had tracked her to Hanakura."

"And that is a lie!" I cried.

Yamada raised his eyebrows.

"Were you at Hanakura?" he asked ironically, little dreaming that I had arrived there but a few minutes after the death of Kinkozan.

"No. But I know one who was," I answered. "I know, also that this lady is innocent of bloodshed."

"You can not prove that!" he exclaimed; and then looked up, amazed, startled, staring at something over my shoulder.

A third person stood in the room. Sawayanagi Ishida had appeared silently, suddenly, as if by magic. Moreover, from behind the thin paper walls, he must have overheard the statement that I had made with emphasis, raising my voice.

Ishida bowed to the colonel.

"I can prove that my friend has spoken nothing but the truth," said he. "I have come here especially to clear the English lady from an accusation that I know to be false."

"Sawayanagi Ishida!" cried Yamada. "Are you also in league with our enemies?"

"Would you ask that of a *samurai?*" Ishida answered with scorn. "I want nothing but justice. I have come from Tanabe by goods train. Having much upon my conscience, I would be alone among the sacred shrines of Nara. I have been told that a foreign lady has been arrested and charged with the murder of a man at Hanakura last night."

"A government agent," Yamada broke in.

Ishida bowed.

"That is unfortunate," said he. "However, I have the lady's own word that he had annoyed her persistently. It was I who killed this man, with the sword of a *samurai*, with neither compunction nor remorse."

"Is that so?" said the colonel, quietly. "Is that so? Then, if a *samurai* must prove a traitor to his country, it were surely better that he fought shoulder to shoulder with the Russians than stabbed in the back those who serve Japan."

"How was I to know that?" asked Ishida, perplexed. "The man had no business to molest this English lady."

"Either you know nothing," the other answered, "or you are an even greater scoundrel than I thought. The lady to whom you refer is not English. She is a Russian—and a spy. Her name is Anna Yashvin. The man you killed had hunted her down. He was even on the point of arresting her, when you killed him and enabled the woman to escape. But she could not hope to avoid detection. I have her now, safe in prison, and my instructions are to act in a summary fashion. A drumhead court martial tomorrow morning, and Anna Yashvin dies at sundown, a murderess and a spy."

Ishida resembled an image graven in stone. He stood motionless, rigid, dumb. There was something about him that was terrible to see. He had the aspect of one suddenly seized with some dreadful and fatal malady.

More than a minute elapsed before he spoke, before he even moved. Then he turned slowly to me, moving his head something after the fashion of a cheap mechanical toy. His voice was weak and husky, like the voice of a man whose veins have been drained of blood.

"Is this the truth?" he asked. "Condescend, honorable friend, to tell me what you know! How am I to believe the words of one who accuses others of the crimes that are his own?"

I knew not how to answer. I saw that, if I would save Anna, I must deliver a death blow to the pride of a gallant friend.

"You make a mistake," I faltered. "You are not to blame."

"You have not answered my question," said Ishida in a hollow voice. "Was the lady we knew as Miss Stevenson in very truth a spy?"

"Anna Yashvin," I admitted, shamefaced and even trembling. "The sister of Nikolai Yashvin, who escaped from Gawazaki by changing clothes with me."

Ishida shivered. With his hunched back and his high, rounded shoulders, he looked like a man at the grave of a friend. His thin lips were pressed together. Presently he lifted his eyes and looked Colonel Yamada straight in the face.

"I understand my duty to my country," said he, proudly, "even if there are those higher placed than myself who do not. If this woman is proved a spy, you will know how to deal with her. That is enough. There is no reason why she should be charged with a crime she never committed. I go now to write a full confession. You need not trouble to have me arrested. I am sensible of the penalties I have incurred."

As he finished speaking, he turned upon his heel and walked from the room, his poor, bent, deformed figure eloquent of pathos, of irreparable defeat.

Because I realized the tragedy in what had happened, because I so dreaded the consequences that I dared not even think of them, for the moment I almost forgot Anna.

I was half inclined to follow my broken and disillusioned friend, when the quiet voice of Colonel Yamada came to my ears—a sing-song monotone, every syllable of the quaint, picturesque language pronounced with equal emphasis.

"Perhaps, it may now be possible for us to return to business. That which Sawayanagi Ishida has told us, and what he proposes to do, puts a somewhat different complexion on the whole affair."

I looked at him sharply. Colonel Yamada had certainly a quick intelligence; in other words, he had the acumen of a shrewd man of business who is not far from a rogue.

"Do you mean," I asked, "that you are now inclined to fall in with my suggestion?"

"It is not impossible," said he, too wise to commit himself. "But, to be candid, my greatest difficulty is certainly removed. I confess, I should have derived a certain satisfaction in getting rid of this woman. Still, my personal vanity is of small account when compared to my reputation as a soldier."

"I think it vanity," said I, with a sneer, "that makes you think your services so indispensable to your country. However, that is no concern of mine. I have a right to know how you propose to fulfil your part of the contract. Do you mean to tell me that no questions will be asked if you take the responsibility upon yourself of setting the prisoner free?"

The colonel bowed.

"Condescend to leave that to me," said he. "I am not altogether without resource. A stream may be crossed in many ways—by ford, by bridge, by ferry. I might even report that the execution has been duly carried out. Excuse me, but who would dream of suspecting that that was incorrect? The thing presents difficulties, it is true; but there is nothing, so far as I can see, that can not be obviated by tact and prudence. With your permission I will think over the matter tonight. I will give you a definite answer tomorrow morning."

"Then, Colonel, for the present, there is nothing more to be said?"

"Nothing," he bowed. "I thank you for your courtesy. If I can meet you halfway in this matter, you may depend upon it I will. Of course I can rely upon your honorable integrity."

CHAPTER XIV

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

WEARY in mind and body as I was, I knew that for what remained of the night it would be useless for me to try to sleep. Within me a sensation of intense excitement was mingled with an almost overwhelming dread. I knew that

this night's work involved the future of three people—Anna, Ishida and myself.

Though the night was cold, I found the atmosphere so oppressive that it was impossible for me to keep still for two consecutive seconds. Intending to go for a walk, I went down to the inn hall where I seated myself upon the steps at the threshold, to put on my boots which I had left in their allotted place.

From this position I was able to see into the little office where a light was burning and where the landlord was busy with his accounts.

The old fellow sat at a high desk. With rounded shoulders, he manipulated his ink brush, now and again sitting back in his chair and adjusting his spectacles, apparently to admire the artistry with which he had formed the complicated Chinese characters.

I walked away from the inn through the wood to the red and white Shinto temple. There I wandered aimlessly about for some time, and finally retraced my steps to the bridge across the stream. There was no longer any light in the windows of the toy shops; the narrow, uneven streets of Nara were deserted; the outline of Mikasayama was just a great black mound, blotting out a section of the sky.

Scarcely thinking where I was going, I followed the road leading uphill through the shrubberies to the temple of Kasuga. Now and again, among the trees, I caught a glimpse of the roof of some temple outbuilding—a belfry, a library, a drum tower or treasure house.

There was something in the atmosphere of the whole place that fitted my mood. The soft, occasional soughing of the wind among the leaves of the evergreens was like the hushed chorus of many whispered prayers. In Buddhism, though the priesthood may have pandered to popular superstition in the way of amulets and charms, I have always felt there is something of the essential truth of things, something that is worth all the asceticism and abnegation of shaven, fasting zealots. To me, at that moment, it was as if I were surrounded by immemorial shrines, idols that had stood for centuries, symbolic of the immutability of Eastern gods.

A distant light suddenly became visible halfway up the slope of a hillock, at the end of a straight, long avenue that led between gigantic cryptomerias, the one and only light in an underworld of religious darkness. Walking rapidly, I turned into the avenue, with no idea that I was being followed, that I had been followed since I had crossed the bridge, but a few hundred yards from the inn.

Long before I got to the end of the avenue the light had disappeared behind the trees, though I had not noticed this. I was preoccupied with my thoughts.

Presently, bemused as I was, I could not be deaf to the sound of a waterfall; and then, quite suddenly, the light appeared again, several feet above the place where I was standing. Vaguely I could discern the outline of a building that had more the appearance of a private house than a temple outbuilding. The light I had seen came from an open window through which I could now see distinctly the figure of a man.

For a moment I believed that I had come back to the Musashino Inn. For the man before me made me think of the landlord. He was seated in the same attitude at a writing desk, and as busily employed, only his shoulders were far more hunched, so much so that his head seemed to be set deep in the middle of his chest.

It was that circumstance that brought me back to my senses. The man in the room above was none other than Ishida, who alone at dead of night in those sacred precincts made open confession of the shame of a *samurai*. In skilfully formed Chinese writing, that to him must have been letters of blood, he laid bare his guilt.

My feelings underwent an extraordinary transformation. Here was a comrade, one who had always been loyal, chivalrous, courteous. And he sat there writing what could be nothing but his own death warrant. No less than the girl whose life was in danger, this friend must

be saved too. He would never stoop to save himself.

I loudly called his name. But my voice was drowned by the roar of the waterfall that came down from among the rocks by the side of the house, leaping step by step over the bare roots of the trees.

Ishida never looked up. He sat writing, pausing only now and again to mix the ink in the little brass ink box upon the table before him.

I HAD taken two or three steps forward with the intention of finding some way to ascend to the house above, when I was seized from behind and hurled violently upon my back.

With the sullen and continuous roar of the water in my ears, I knew from the first that there was little chance that my cries for help would be heard. I struggled desperately, making every effort to throw off the weight of a man who was seated across my chest.

My assailant had every advantage from the first. He had taken me by surprise and had gained the superior position, with his short legs intertwined around mine, and all his weight thrown forward upon the upper part of my body.

A blow upon the head with the butt end of a revolver might have succeeded in its object and knocked me out, had it not fallen upon the base of the frontal bone between my eyes. Knowing that I could never overcome my assailant by sheer strength, in spite of the fact that I had studied for years the art of ju-jutsu, I resolved on the spur of the moment to attempt a ruse. When I had been straining myself to raise my shoulders from the ground, I suddenly threw back my head and let all my limbs go limp, as if I had, indeed, lost consciousness.

And during the brief moment when I lay with my eyes closed I learned all I wanted to—and more. The grip upon my throat relaxed; I felt a hand groping in the inside pocket of my coat. Without attempting to move, I half opened my eyes, and saw the light from the window reflected upon the sallow, cadaverous face of Colonel Yamada.

My counter-attack came with surprising suddenness. By means of a trick that I had learned in Japan, I jerked my assailant forward, so that he all but turned a somersault. And before he could recover his balance I was on him like a wildcat and had sent home a clenched fist with all my force upon the very point of his chin.

There was nothing feigned about that knockout. Yamada was dazed long enough for me to untie the sash of his kimono, to roll him over like a log and bind his wrists tightly behind his back.

In a moment he came to, struggling into a sitting position, to find himself looking down the muzzle of his own revolver.

"And is this the way you conduct your business affairs?" I asked.

For a moment he did not answer. He looked with a pained expression at the window in the house above him, where suddenly the light went out.

We were now in utter darkness, until our eyes had become accustomed to the starlight.

"I did wrong. Please excuse me. You will understand—I had so much at stake."

The words had been uttered with the characteristic politeness of the Japanese. I shrugged my shoulders.

"I might have known I couldn't trust you," I said. "You are no *samurai* like that man yonder. Your badges of rank conceal the soul of a coolie."

"Are not such insults a waste of time?" he asked me. "I thought I saw a very simple way out of my difficulties, if I could but get hold of that letter."

"That I understand," said I. "But no doubt you're right; we should return to our business at the point where we left off —only this time, it is I who dictate terms —not you."

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I give you the choice of two evils. Either you go with me now to that house and face the full exposure of what has happened, or you accompany me back to the

inn and write as I dictate—a free pardon for Anna Yashvin."

"And how am I to explain it afterwards?"

"You should have thought of that before. It is you who have forced me to fall back upon threats. You should find it easier to account for the escape of a prisoner than for this attempt at robbery."

He was silent a moment.

"And if I do as you want," he asked, "you give me in exchange that letter?"

"My former offer," said I. "That is a fair bargain. But I must have a written order for the release of the prisoner before daybreak. I can see no difficulty about the thing, provided I can get you safely into the inn, which will not be so easy if the proprietor is still awake. I do not intend to untie your hands until I want you to write, and even then I keep you covered. You must realize already that I'm a desperate man, I'm playing with life and death. At the slightest attempt to doublecross me again I shoot and take the consequences."

"I agree," he bowed, with something that was not far from a sigh. "I am at your mercy. I am wise enough to know when to capitulate."

"To generous terms," I added. "So far as you and I are concerned, the tables are turned. I'm top dog now. Come! Get to your feet, and be quick! Walk straight down the avenue, and turn to the right or left only when I tell you. And never forget for a moment that I'm close behind with this."

AS I SPOKE I gave the man a prod in the back with the barrel of his own gun. My eyes had now become accustomed to the light, and I could make out the figure of my captive. And very strange, indeed, did the little man look, with his kimono hanging loose, disclosing in the front white undergarments that looked almost comical above elastic sided boots.

And thus downhill we went, along the avenue that leads between the stone lanterns from the temple of Kasuga. We crossed the bridge, passing among the rickety wooden houses of the toy makers, and thence through the wood to the Musashino Inn.

We saw at a distance that a light still burned in the landlord's little office; and for that reason we went round cautiously to the other side of the house and entered by another door, for the colonel, no less than myself, had no inclination to be seen. For all that, of such frail and flimsy structure is the average Japanese building that our footsteps must have been heard upon the crisp, creaking matting, though I had taken off both my own boots and those of my prisoner. For no sooner had a light been lit in the colonel's room than there came a knock upon the woodwork of a sliding panel and the voice of the old landlord upon the other side of the paper wall.

Would his augustness honorably deign to receive a letter that was said to be of great importance, which had just arrived by the hand of a distinguished messenger.

I was in a dilemma. The colonel himself could not go to the door with his hands bound behind his back. Whispering my instructions to Yamada, I drew back the panel less than half an inch, whilst the colonel ordered the landlord to throw the letter in the room.

The moment it fell to the floor we both realized what it was. It was Ishida's confession that he had killed the man at Hanakura and had thereby assisted in the escape of a Russian spy.

I felt as if something had touched my heart that was like a grip of ice. But when I looked up, the colonel was grinning, his yellow, unclean teeth showing like those of a horse in his sallow, sunken countenance.

"That may not justify me," said he, "but it will, at least, help matters—if I can find a scapegoat."

"Ishida!" I cried. "A scapegoat! You're not fit to wear the same sandals, to breathe the same air!"

"We are here for a definite reason," said he, with a calmness that drove me mad.

"Free my hands, and I will do what you wish. You will find paper and an ink box in that little lacquer cupboard, under the *kakemono*."

CHAPTER XV

PROMETHEUS

NO QUESTIONS were asked. There was not a glimmer of surprise upon the impenetrable countenance of the non-commissioned officer in charge of the military guard that had been mounted over the little police cell in Nara. By the light of a lantern the man studied the printed release warrant, closely scrutinizing the signature of the colonel, reading over and over again the brief accompanying letter that Yamada had purposely written for me in *katakana*, the alphabet of the peasants.

It appeared that Colonel Yamada was satisfied that there had been a serious mistake. The wrong person had been arrested. On both charges the female prisoner was innocent. Since her arrest other evidence had come to hand in regard to the murder of the government agent at Hanakura.

Of the events of that early morning, of certain things that happened of which I knew nothing at the time, I learned afterward, when I had returned to the States and got into touch with my many friends in Tokyo.

I am not concerned with Yamada, beyond the fact that, so far as he was concerned, I was faithful to my promise, though I may have broken my trust with poor little Nashimura—and as to that, I have nothing on my conscience that I served the living rather than the dead.

How the colonel explained matters to headquarters is more his affair than mine. I have no doubt he found some plausible excuse for allowing Anna Yashvin to follow her brother from the country. And if he got out of it with nothing more than a reprimand, he atoned for that by proving himself an intelligence officer of parts during the latter stages of the investment of Port Arthur; for the war brought him nothing but further distinctions and promotion.

He was welcome to that. I had even more at stake than he. I remember waiting in the cold small hours before the dawn, listening to the jangling of the keys as I followed the jailor into a damp and narrow passage.

I scarcely dared to breathe, until the door of her cell was opened, and she came into the lanternlight like a pale and beautiful spirit from another world.

For she was snow white in the face, her eyes black rimmed, like those of one who had watched and prayed all night in her own dark Gethsemane. And yet her tall figure was erect. She approached with slow, but certain, steps.

When she saw me, her lips parted a little, and she stood quite still. No sign of astonishment or weakness, neither tears nor ecstasies; but I saw a kind of radiance come gradually into her eyes.

Without haste, and seemingly without emotion, she placed both hands upon her breast.

"My dear!"

That was all she said. I couldn't speak. I could do nothing but hold out a hand to her.

And as she took it, a sound passed her lips that was in part the laughter of a happy girl and in part a woman's sigh. I knew what it meant, the consummation of her suffering. As yet she did not know that she was free. She was well content that again I was at her side.

"Anna!" I whispered. "Come. You are free."

She gave me no answer, but a tighter grip of my hand; and thus together we went out into the gray half light of early morning.

I had two rickshaws in waiting, and in these we passed up the wide avenue of the stone lanterns, the *torii* and pavilions beneath the sacred cryptomerias.

In the sky was the first steel blue streak of dawn beneath leaden clouds that hung low above the snow capped hills up which our coolies toiled. And presently, as the

daylight spread, we could look down upon the pine trees and the temples.

In a narrow pass, where the track we followed was cut like a shelf in the virgin rock of the mountain that towers over Horyuji, our rickshaw men, pouring with perspiration, halted for a rest.

Toward the Inland Sea lay the water of Izumi-Nada, black beneath the clouds, standing forth like a great wall. To the east the reflected light of the rising sun illumined what might have been a distant fairyland, with a canopy of gold.

Northward in the wooded valley we could see the ruined walls of ancient Nara that had once enclosed the palaces of Shoguns. And here yet stood the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, which is called the Hall of Dreams.

As we rested in that place, waiting for our men to gain their breath before we went down toward the sea, we spoke of the future and our life together, little suspecting that there was one who even then looked down upon us from the mountain-top above.

It was this man who had gone his way through the hall of his dreams that were ended; and though he sat alone among the drifting clouds, his soul was in the dust. Deformed, a hunchback, his attitude was eloquent of dejection and defeat. I can picture to myself the scene my heart was too full to see.

He must have watched us as we passed into the valley, to freedom and to life, watched us until we were lost to view in the silvery mist that rose with the sun upon the flooded rice fields.

I can see him seated on a boulder, haggard and tortured, a Prometheus of Japan, gripping fiercely his bamboo walking stick, the innate sadness in his oval eyes mingled with stern resolve.

He would have done all deliberately, without haste or hesitation. To the gods of his nation and his forebears he bequeathed his soul before he drew the blade.

True to the last to his race and caste and creed, he placed the hilt of his sword upon the ground, and holding the sharp thin blade in his hands, he fell upon it—to lie dead among the hills lit by the Rising Sun, the symbol of his nation, high above the temple of the Hall of Dreams in the green terraced valley.

For thus and there they found my friend—Ishida, the *samurai*.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Gold Seekers, Attention!

IF THE SIZE of a *vara* is all that stands between men and the great treasure of the Sun Worshippers (described in Camp-Fire of our February 15th issue), Comrade J. Allan Dunn believes he can solve the riddle.

Referring to the interesting letter of F. L. Alden in the Camp-Fire of February 15th, the matter of a *vara*—it got mispelled *vera*—has been fairly well worked out. Thirty-three inches is the accepted legal measure in modern Mexico; but, in the days of the original Spanish Conquest, it might well be considered that the Spanish equivalent was adopted, changed later, because of the fractions, to a handier length.

California deeds still contain the *vara* of the old Spanish grants. There a *vara* equals .84 of a square yard, which would square-root down to 33.36 lineal. The *vara* of Spain, Cuba, the Philippines and Venezuela is 33.38. Argentina and Paraguay hold it at 34.12. Central America at 33.87. In Cadiz, Chile and Peru it is 33.37. In Colombia 31.5. In Honduras, as in Mexico, 33. In Portuguese Brazil, 43.

If Alden tried some of these variations his measurements might yet come right. Perhaps he did. Probably he did. He reads like a thorough man. But I have a hunch that the old Spanish 33.38 might work out. Just a hunch, but Camp-Fire readers might like the figures.

As to Aztec gold trove:

The Pueblo Indians have among them documents that seem to be legends of the conquest of New Mexico. To them they attach great importance. Some of these writings are in the *estufa*—temple—of San Juan, forty miles from Santa Fé. An Indian Agent, Major Greiner, in 1862, managed to translate a part of one which had an interesting account

of Montezuma commanding the Indian caciques to render homage—or tribute—to Cortez in jars of gold, bars of silver, others pointing out rich mines. In the document Montezuma is quoted as follows:

"I will respond to you forever as you have to me. I command this province which is the first of Mexico, the pueblo of Teguayo, which governs one hundred and two pueblos. In this pueblo there is a great mine nearby in which they cut with gold hatchets the gold of my crown. The great province Zuien where was born the great Malinche. In this province is a silver mine. The province of Acoma, in which there is a blackish-colored hill, in which there is found a silver mine."

I have not quoted all. Montezuma sent Malinche to these provinces and the Spaniards followed to locate their missions—and grab the loot.

The sacred fire kept burning in 1860 was peculiar to Pecos and then not worshipped. It is a question as to which Montezuma is always meant, as the Pueblos once had a mighty chief to whom they gave the name after they had learned it from the Spanish missionaries. This chief they regarded as their Messiah and in some of their villages sentinels climbed the *estufa* tops *at dawn* and looked eastward for his coming. May still. I haven't been there for years.

After the Mexican rebellion of the Indians against the Spanish, who worked them in the mines as slaves, they filled up most of the mines and concealed their entrances. This was the "Massacre of 1680." Of many of these all trace but vague tradition has been lost, though a hunter or trapper sometimes found one by accident.

A very old and rich silver mine was found in the Cerillos—Little Hills—between Santa Fé and the Old Placer. The latter is twenty-seven miles from Santa Fé. In one of the shafts of the Cerillos mine, over a hundred and fifty feet deep, now full of water, they found in '65 an Indian canoe, supposedly used for transportation from one shaft to another.

No doubt the *estufa* and cliff dwelling pictographs hold hints as to treasure trove. Someone may find the mother lode where they cut out the soft virgin metal for Montezuma's crown.

In all probability the Peg Leg was refound and cleared. Without any question many desert prospectors have been unable to relocate finds because of the windblown shifts of sand that cover the float.

A third of a century ago—Leaping Lizards, that makes me feel temporarily ancient!—I was in Denver. Rugg and Barton, of Cripple Creek, showed me placer gold they had found on the Gila River. Coarse colors, chispas, small nuggets. They had sent down a grubstake party, being busy with the new diggings Stratton had unearthed at Cripple Creek—and nothing was ever heard of the men. As they trusted them thoroughly there was one inference. Apaches. I am not certain now that the placer was on the Gila itself or a tributary. Barton never said just where it was nor did he have any map.

But I was at a ripe age for adventure, not quite a tenderfoot. I had some money and they didn't. I did not consider it a plant since they were going along.

Rugg was inclined to think that the grubstake crowd had not handled the Apaches properly. The find was close to their reservation and they resented whites coming any where near it—partly racial hate and partly the sound logic that a gold find might mean they would be moved on.

He warned us about how to behave if any bucks showed up. We got pretty close to the place, within a night and a morning's trek of it, going in from Phœnix, eight of us, with horses and one wagon.

We saw smokes that day in the hills and, in the afternoon, we found them riding parallel to us. They didn't do anything much until we made camp when they rode in. I remember one hawk-faced buck, naked, save for a breechclout and a hair fillet, riding a paint-horse; who spotted me as the kid of the outfit and took hold of my rifle, signing he wanted to look at it. Remembering Rudd's advice I grinned and hung on and by-and-bye he let go. We gave them some tobacco and Rudd talked with them.

The upshot of it was that we kept our scalps and went back. They told us to. Said if we went any further in the morning we'd stay there. In fiction we'd have gone on but Rudd was leader, not a coward, a man round fifty who knew his Apache. We talked it over that night. It was pretty plain then what had happened to the others we'd sent in, or Rudd and Barton had. We set sentries that night. I heard and saw Apaches in every wind-moved clump of sage and brush but there was no actual alarm though we were a bit nervous along towards dawn.

There were over forty bucks on hand the time we had got chow ready. They meant business.

We went back to Phœnix without finding the placer or the vein Rudd hoped we might uncover. Rudd's dead and so is Barton. They made their strike in Creede. That Gila gold is still waiting for someone, likely as not. Rudd gave me a quill of it.

I imagine I've taken up space enough. Hope it is sufficiently interesting. True, anyway.

J. ALLAN DUNN

The Stumbling Block

JUST HOW FAR may a writer go, incorporating fact with fiction? A magazine such as this is faced with the problem almost daily. In this instance a well corroborated orgy of terrible slaughter was used as the denouement of a fictional tale—and a number of readers have written to ask seriously if such a thing could actually happen.

Major Wheeler-Nicholson's reply, written to one of the inquirers, Comrade Del Wilton of Detroit:

The editor of *Adventure* has forwarded me your letter of the 4th, in which you take exception to the climax in my story, "The Corral of Death".

I must confess that I can't blame you much, as it does seem a little fantastic; but this is one of the cases wherein truth is stranger than fiction.

The Mexican Gordino was taken from life, being no less a person than Fierro, the "Butcher," so-called by us on the Border and by the Mexicans themselves. He was the executioner of Villa's outfit and killed any number of people by his own hand. While commanding Troop K, 2nd Cavalry on the border near Sierra Blanca, Texas, in 1912–13, I heard that Fierro had slaughtered with his own hand some two hundred "Red Flaggers" as the Orozcos were called. This story was all up and down the Border.

It was published as news by the Mexican papers at that time, there being a very full account of it in "*El Diario*" of Mexico City. This account was so well written that it was translated and republished in the "Living Age" in a number along in February or March of last year. The account as given in the "Living Age" is substantially the account I have woven into the story. Further accounts of this Fierro can be found in "Roving and Fighting" by Major E. S. O'Reilly published by the Century Co. Writers sometimes let their imaginations run riot with them; but in this particular case you will have to blame Fierro himself and not me, as the incident actually took place. Sorry it left a bad taste in your mouth, and we'll hope for better luck next story.

—MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON.

SOME CALL HIM BRAVE

Old Fort Kearney, long ago,
Faced a siege in a blizzard's snow;
Faced three thousand circling Sioux,
Raging reds whose arrows slew
Every man who showed his head;
Faced them, short of men and lead.

Full two hundred miles 'twould be
Down the trail to Laramie.
"Who will go?" asked Carrington.
Quick as the word there up spoke one,
Phillips, nicknamed "Portuguese":
"Sir, I try it, if you please!"

Phillips, trapper, hunter, scout,
Waits till night, then ventures out;
Crawls out crafty through the snow—
Weather thirty-odd below—
Coyote-like on hands and knees,
Phillips, called the "Portuguese",
Leading, lest their keen eyes find him,
A snow white horse five rods behind him,
Bareback lest the saddle shake—
So he crawls until daybreak.

Freezing, through the day he hides;
Darkness comes, he mounts and rides,
Rides with death for caravan,
Chewing frozen pemmican.
From the Big Horn Mountains wail
Lusty blizzards on his trail.
Eyes that drowse and feet that freeze—
Torture hounds the "Portuguese".

Yet at dawn of Christmas day,
Help still forty miles away,
Horseshoe Station greets his eyes.
There the telegraph he tries.
Wires have snapped with weighted snow—
Forty more cold miles to go!

Midnight at Fort Laramie,
Gay with Christmas revelry . . .

Like a phantom from the night,
Cased in ice and snowy white,
At the door his gasping call
Stops the music of the ball.
Frozen, hands and feet and knees,
In reels Phillips, "Portuguese".

Old Fort Kearney, long ago,
Heard thrice-welcome bugles blow.
Up the trail from Laramie
Troopers brought delivery.
Though no stone marks Phillips' grave,
Some there are who call him brave.

Throoming like a muffled drum,
Still the Big Horn blizzards come,
Chanting snowy litanies:
"*We remember 'Portuguese'!*"

—S. OMAR BARKER.

Of Cabbages And Kings

OF COURSE the correct phrase to substitute for "steel-jacketed bullet" is "full metal-patched bullet" or "cupro-nickel-jacketed bullet". But just as many a New York "peek-open" proprietor is padlocked for a year as a "rum-seller"—though he may have handled nothing more jolly than dismal red ink—so in common jargon of the Service the term "steel-jacketed" still is used to designate any cartridge, *not* a dum-dum. And I hesitate to change editorially either this or many another widely used misnomer; because after all directness and plain understandability are two of the most valuable qualities in any story.

Thirty minutes is a long time for two heavyweight fighters to swap punches;

yet when professional pugilists of the past have scrapped for *more than seven hours* of (actual) fighting time—with bare knuckles, too—thirty minutes without a rest does not seem impossible, providing the men were hardened lumber camp bullies, used to prolonged exertion. Of course there are few of our present half-baked cream puff heavies who could do it . . .

In respect to amateur and professional athletics, Comrade Anderson has some ideas I believe indubitably sound—if a trifle hard to put in force.

This letter is just a few casual remarks . . . *obiter dicta*, so to speak . . . things that have suggested themselves to me, from time to time.

First, likewise foremost, a suggestion for improving *Adventure* (chorus from the Camp-Fire: "It can't be done!" Aw, hush up and gimme a chance, fellows!) Some years ago, a member of the U. S. Navy wrote in and requested that the phrase, "drunken sailor" be placed on the Index Expurgatorius . . . he claimed that it might have meant something once, but now it misrepresented the fine, upstanding young Navy lad, who never drops in at the Yoshiwara, or takes a drink of anything stronger than ice-cream soda . . . of course, that's all bosh and nonsense . . . I've seen the said fine, upstanding, etc., lad so pie-eyed he didn't know which way was up . . . and, as Ring Lardner justly remarks, "What of it?" . . . nothing of it, of course . . . if any gentleman thinks the auspicious occasion demands that he take from one to forty drinks, why shouldn't he? . . . more power to him! . . . but the point is that since *Adventure* has an Index Expurgatorius, there's a phrase I'd like to see relegated thereto . . . "steel-jacketed bullet" . . . there ain't no sich animile . . . twenty rounds of steel-jacketed bullets would cut the rifling out of a gun so that it would thereafter be useful only as a crutch for a one-legged man . . . and not a very good crutch, at that . . . too short . . . but Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson uses the phrase in "The Corral of Death" . . . so does General Ared White in "The Spy Trap" . . . and the former implies . . . not says . . . that the U. S. Army uses soft-nosed bullets . . . oh, dear, dear! . . . Aw, what you kicking about, fellow? They were good stories, weren't they? You enjoyed them, didn't you? Then quit your belly-aching! . . . oh, all right! . . . but in "Fist and Boot" James Stevens has two huskies stand toe to toe and swap punches for half an hour . . . thirty minutes! . . . My gosh, Mag! . . . oh, I'm not saying it couldn't happen . . . I've seen a lot of things happen that couldn't . . . but, as Lord Wellington said, "It certainly puts a monstrous strain upon belief" . . . I've seen a lot of fights, but two big men swapping punches for half an hour . . . oh, well, I'll believe it if you tell me it's so . . .

Mr. Pope tells us that the King Cobra rates high in dangerous qualities, having been known to produce fatal results within fifteen minutes . . . I remember hearing Raymond Ditmars tell of a man who was struck by a Florida rattler, and died in twenty minutes in spite of instant surgical attention, and the use of anti-toxin . . . Mr. Diamond-back is no household pet, either! . . . you notice I said struck, not bitten . . . the cobra bites . . . the rattler strikes and re-coils for another shot . . . he uses what the pianist calls a staccato touch! . . . I remember an old chap who called himself the Rattle snake King . . . he had a lot of timber rattlers, and used to toy idly with them, same as if they were kittens . . . everybody prognosticated that some day he'd be killed . . . he was . . . fell out of a wagon and broke his neck! . . . at least, that's what I heard . . . I won't swear to it . . .

When you start a discussion on the question of amateur and professional athletes, you sure start something! . . . my own personal impression, after some years of associating with both amateur and professional athletes, is that the simon-pure amateur who is really good is about as numerous as the dodo bird . . . oh, there are some . . . and a lot more who are moderately good . . . and a lot who are legal but not ethical amateurs . . . I could give you instances in sufficient number to sicken you . . . but there is in this country a large and extensive class of professional amateurs . . . amateurs who take money *sub rosa* . . . or under the camouflage of "expenses" . . . I've known one of them to demand $75 for expenses for a trip from New York City to Orange, N. J., and one afternoon's performance . . . the distance is 15 miles, the total cost, including lunch, would be under $2.50 . . . or who hold down jobs that pay five or six thousand a year and require attendance at the office from 12:45 till ten minutes of one every other rainy Thursday in March . . . my own solution of the problem would be this; every school and college athlete to be eligible for any team, regardless of whether he has ever taken money or not, *provided* that he is taking a regular course (not one in the Literary Aspects of Neolithic Symphonic Music) *and is up in his classes;* every non-scholastic or non-collegiate competition to be open to all comers . . . this would bar the collegiate "tramp athlete", and would eliminate the incentive for professional amateurism . . . it would not stop the proselyting evil, but I don't believe anything can stop that anyhow, short of drowning all alumni . . . will this scheme ever be adopted? . . . don't make me laugh! . . . not while an amateur can make more money as an amateur than as a pro, it won't . . . more profitable to be an amateur than a pro? . . . sure! . . . very often it is . . . and I don't mean legitimately profitable, either . . . remove the distinction between amateur and pro, and you remove the incentive to underhanded trickery, which same is now so prevalent . . . then if a person wants to play for fun, regardless of money, he can, and if he wants the money he can go get it without resorting to dishonorable subterfuge, as he now does . . . there's a mighty good semi-pro

baseball team in a certain town I know . . . last year I was talking with the manager, and asked him who was going to pitch for him in an important game . . . "I've got a dandy pitcher," he said. "You'll like him; he's the only pitcher that beat Whosis College this year. Of course I can't tell you his name, but you'll know him when you see him." . . . "Whosis College" of course is synthetic; if I told you the name of the college you'd know the man . . . but the point is that there was a young fellow being trained in deceit and chicanery, simply because he needed the money and was up against an arbitrary and foolish rule of eligibility . . . it's all wrong! . . . I'm no cynic, but I don't believe in teaching boys and girls to lie and be crooked, which is what the present system is doing . . . some years ago I was helping promote some amateur boxing tournaments . . . boy after boy came to us and said: "What do I get out of it?" . . . "A gold watch for first place, medals for second and third." . . . "Hell! Nothing doing. Every time I go on at the Woof A. C. or the Wow Boxing Club I get $25 in cash, win, lose, or draw. Good-bye!" . . . Sometimes it was $10, sometimes as high as $50 . . . and these boys were all amateurs, within the law . . . whose fault is it? The fault of the promoters, of course! . . . as long as they make money out of the promoting of amateur athletic contests, the performers will want their bit . . . and why not? . . . we weren't making anything on our tournaments, but by spending cash for performers we could have done so . . . you can't blame the boys at all for their attitude . . . remove the distinction between amateur and pro, and they can take the money openly . . . and a good thing all around . . .

—PAUL L. ANDERSON.

From Foreign Legion Headquarters

GEORGES SURDEZ, whose tales of northern Africa have been solidly acclaimed in *Adventure*, now is down at Eckmuhl, Oran, having the time of his life with old friends. I am glad to say that we have on hand three stories by Surdez, which will appear during fall of this year. And we are looking forward to many more.

His letter:

Obviously (he sent photographs), I am having a great time. Getting new dope is but a part of it. Anyone would love these guys; they're real, solid. The other day, at the Military Hospital where I went to visit a friend temporarily laid low by a peace-time wound, saw one of the handful of survivors of General Clavery's escort, the officer who was slain by Beraber (no, no, *not* Berber!) raiders. A German sergeant of Legion. Great egg, although in pretty bad shape. To sort of sooth his feelings, they gave him the Military Medal. The yarn is great, and I'll turn it out sometime.

Went with the wife to a concert given by the Legion, and she ate up that Wagner stuff. As for me, the finale was the thing—they had extra trumpeters in at the finish to help out in the Legion's March—and it was something worth coming all the way here to listen to. Other Legion news: The Legion's football team cleaned up the selected team from the British Fleet stopping in Oran, a while back.

By the way, one of the vessels was the *Adventure*—and for several days, every other naval ribbon forcibly reminded me of the bunch at Butterick. Made me a little sad, home-sickish, mostly when I'd be imbibing some good drink—alone.

Say, did you print anything about the Monument to the Legion's Dead? Hope you did; there's nothing wrong about Americans contributing to it, and I believe many would like to. If you do get contributions, you can send them direct to Lieutenant Aristide Merolli, Bureau de la Place, ler Regiment Etranger, Sidi-bel-Abbes etc. If for no other reason than that they remember one American, Seeger, with much admiration. At the concert, a Legionaire recited his famous "Rendez-vous" in French. At the same time, I heard Borelli's famous farewell to his dead. A beautiful poem, worthy of the Legion, but which I had never understood as well as in these surroundings.

Talk about the gift of prophecy: Allan Seeger seemed to have sensed the future—wrote something that is most pat:

"On those red fields where blow with furious blow
Was countered, whether the gigantic fray
Rolled by the Meuse or at the Bois Sabot,
Accents of ours were in the grim mêlée;
And on those furthest rims of hallowed ground
Where the forlorn, the gallant charge expires,
When the slain bugler has long ceased to sound,
And on the tangled wires
The last wild rally staggers, crumbled, stops,
Withered beneath the shrapnel's iron showers:—
Now heaven be thanked, we gave a few brave drops;
Now heaven be thanked, a few brave drops were ours."

Shall they go unremembered because they fell a few months before their countrymen? Poor reward for them, who were heralds of the time to come. It is just that hatred should die out, but most unjust that those who served should be forgotten. German sympathizers? Let them think over this inscription, over the grave of a veteran of Verdun: "*X . . . Died like a Prussian—for the Legion.*" Such words are lifted above the theatrical—by death.

An afterthought: If Merolli happened to be transferred—which would certainly happen if genuine fighting started anywhere—he has not missed a serious show of the Legion in nineteen years—the letters might follow him. So address instead: Officier de la Place, etc., etc.

Enclosed a picture of the Monument, surmounted by the Earth, battlefield of the Legion. I'm putting the brakes on, as it is difficult to start thinking of the

Foreign Regiments, to see them near to and not give way to an enthusiasm hard for those at a distance to comprehend.

Greetings to all.

—GEORGES SURDEZ.

The Gentleman From Tasmania—

—HAS THE FLOOR. His letter, mailed on December fifth, did not reach this office until late in April. Sounds like it must have come by windjammer.

I suppose I'm a bit late with this letter, but I've only just seen *Adventure* with Mr. Teall's letter.

I quote John Foster Fraser on the Australian idiom. In his book on Australia, he says: " . . . Yet that Cockney is spoken is undoubted. The speaking of it is not limited to one stratum of society. The curious thing to me was that Cockney was spoken by one member of the family, whilst the other members of the family spoke perfectly correct English. It is not only the visitor whose ears notice the Cockney. Australians themselves are conscious of it."

But there is a reason why standard Cockney will not cover the Australian. It is that, although there is a distinct Cockney pronunciation of certain vowels, the words employed colloquially are far from all similar.

To show what I mean, I take the liberty of quoting from Clements Ripley's good yarn "Dust And Sun." Mr. Ripley makes the Cockney hotelkeeper say:

"Oh, yes, sir. They're a bit strict on parties going upcountry just now. 'Count of unsettled times, sir —this 'ere Pedro Morales and 'is crowd, sir. There's been more than a little talk of a revolution lately. Bit of 'all in your 'at', if you ask me, but there's always the chance, and a revolution's a very nasty thing. Bound to bring in a lot of 'ighly undesirable characters. So if you'll just let me 'ave the papers I'll 'ave everything shipshape in 'alf a shake."

That seems to me good Cockney, but though an Australian would use the same pronunciation of vowels, he would say that piece this way:

"Yeh; they're sort of strict on parties headed upcountry just now. Trouble is the unsettled times—this Pedro Morales and 'is mob. There's been a lot of talk about a revolution lately. I reckon it's bunkum, but there's always the chance an' a revolution's a fair cow of a thing. Bound to bring in a lot of crooks. So if you'll gimme the papers I'll 'ave everything fixed for you right away."

It must be admitted there is a distinct difference in the vocabularies employed by Cockneys and Australians. Not one Australian in ten thousand would say "a lot of 'ighly undesirable characters." There is far too much American slang and Australian slang in the Australian vernacular for Cockney dialect to cover it. Many expressions coined around the shearing sheds, the sheep camps, and on the stock routes, the camel pads, and the buffalo trail would be Greek to a Cockney. As for instance: "a fair cow", "a slingoff", "bonzer", "the dinkum oil", etc. Australians use "I reckon" pretty consistently, and "Gee" has long been overworked. In place of "sure", the Australian says "Too right." In place of "buddy" or "pal" he generally uses "cobber" or "mate."

It is generally supposed that Australians have adopted American slang from the movies; but the bulk of it was in the country long before movies were thought of. American expressions were introduced around the mining camps in the early days by American prospectors, and many Australians, forgetting their origin, have come to regard them as Australian.

Nevertheless, a visitor is justified in saying there is Cockney in Australia, for he would be struck first by the pronunciation of the words and not by the slang employed. This applies especially to the cities. Therefore, since both Mr. Teall and H. Bedford-Jones based their argument on the pronunciation alone, they were right. But Australian phraseology is totally different from Cockney.

—N. W. NORMAN.

Sex

SOME YEARS ago a Mrs. Dennett—a *grandmother*, a serious, innately lovely and decent woman who had been recognized as a student and authority on social contacts—wrote a statement of the facts of life. In her mind was no thought of commercialization; she had done her best for her own grandchildren. (It may be said that no one disputes the decent and loyal lives of these fortunate offspring.) But Mrs. Dennett has been jailed.

The children learned, and benefited.

Now, I am not going to preach—much. My own mother happened to be the first woman doctor graduated from the largest medical school in the Middle West. My father was a physician-surgeon whom thousands revered and loved. I myself studied at Rush Medical. And I have three children, two girls and a boy—the girls now approaching the greatest mystery of life. Am I equipped to tell them all they now can understand—and supplement this with honest information from time to time—not "old-fogy stuff", but something they can believe? I shiver.

All I can say is I wish there were more Mrs. Dennetts, women who have known all and are able to talk plainly without thinking of book royalties, or vaudeville.

—ANTHONY M. RUD

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

North Country

SKIS and snowshoes.

Request:—"Would appreciate your opinion of advantages of ski over snowshoe. Advantages of bearpaw models over tailed models for Western mountain work? Is the Indian fine mesh superior to the commercial coarse mesh jobs?"

—F. B. THOMSON, San Diego, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. W. H. Price:—The advantages of skis over snowshoes are very limited and they are practically never found in our Northern Country, and can not be considered serviceable for *real* work. In open country, or on long trips over frozen lakes, an experienced man on skis could go twice as far as a man on snowshoes in a day's travel, but could not carry with any degree of comfort a load of more than twenty to thirty pounds. In extremely cold weather and rough going skis are frequently broken, and it is sometimes almost impossible to repair them satisfactorily unless proper materials are at hand. Snowshoes, on the other hand, will carry a man almost anywhere in the bush and can be repaired without any trouble.

Snowshoes are invaluable in clearing away snow in making an overnight camp. Bearpaw models are much superior to tailed shoes in heavy brush country. You will readily understand that in this kind of travel there are many places where it is difficult to turn a shoe three and a half or four feet long. The bearpaw model, however, is almost circular and will get you in and out of many places otherwise inaccessible.

I have never yet seen a snowshoe made in the factories of some of our big cities which can equal shoes made by the Indians. The webbing is never quite as good and when traveling over wet snow stretches badly. I have seen these shoes lose their shape to such an extent that they became almost useless. The Indian fine mesh is a product of many hundred years of actual experience under vigorous travel conditions and I have no hesitation in saying that they can not be improved upon.

There is a snowshoe made by the Barren Ground Indians which might be called a cross between a snowshoe and a ski. It is six to seven feet long and not more than five inches wide. The toe is raised quite as high as the average ski.

If you care to write me again telling me just what use you plan to make of the snowshoes and at the same time let me know your weight and height, I will be glad to recommend a model to suit your purpose.

Uniforms

AN ENGLISH reader reminisces very interestingly about Oxford in war time. The uniform of the American Indian police.

Request:—"Very many thanks for your careful and exhaustive replies to my questions on the old Army uniforms. I am tempted very strongly to trouble you on two further points.

Over here we are rather more familiar with dress uniforms, particularly those of the Foot and Horse Guards and certain Scottish regiments. Full dress is worn for ceremonials, from the guard at Buckingham Palace down to the band of the Royal Blankshires playing at a provincial flower show, 'by kind permission of the Commanding Officer.' But for the rest, of course, it is the eternal khaki, with a well-blancoed belt for afternoons off. Our Air Force wear a slatey-blue uniform, of the same style as that of ordinary troops, and of late the black (or very dark blue) beret, tam-o'-shanter, or what-have-you, of the Tank Corps, has been becoming more and more common. All of which I suppose you already know.

During the War, Oxford was full of troops. Its twenty-odd colleges with attendant institutions such as the Examination Schools, University Museum, etc., were turned into barracks and hospitals.

Cadets were taught to use Lewis guns where nothing more military than Cæsar's 'De Bello Gallico' had been seen before. Port Meadow, a two-mile expanse of common land just outside the city, became an aerodrome. In the streets English, Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders—many Maoris among them—brushed shoulders with U. S. airmen, of whom a small force was stationed here. Up at the aerodrome I saw my first and only baseball game; although Chipping Norton, the cradle of your national pastime, is only a few miles away.

Periodically, at nights, the railway hooter would wail a dismal warning, out would go all gas and electric light, and special constables would patrol the streets—air raids. Luckily no Zepp ever got right to Oxford, though some got pretty near.

I mentioned further questions. These may be outside your department, in which case please hold to *Adventure's* rule.

In what way, if any, did the uniform of the Indian Police differ from that of the Army (a) in the old days, (b) now?

A photo of the Standing Rock, S. Dak., Police of 1890 shows them wearing a blue uniform with, in many cases, moccasins and police badges. It does not show the trousers clearly enough to decide the color or whether striped. That is what I want most to know.

On the subject of hats: I know the modern Service Stetson from first-hand acquaintance. And consider it an abomination. I take it that the Spanish-American War hat was that of which Teddy Roosevelt (honorary D. C. L. of this University, by the way) was perhaps the most famous wearer.

I have in an old magazine a group, taken on the field some time after the Custer defeat, of a party of the 5th Infantry. The lieutenant in command, a Lieut. Partello, if I remember rightly, is wearing a black hat all right, but the privates appear to have drab ones. I seem to remember seeing a movie of the Little Big Horn fight in which Custer's troops went into battle in drab hats. But the movies are capable of anything.

In conclusion, I should like to thank you once more for your help."

—G. E. S. TURNER, Oxford, England.

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—Your letter of January 15 was much appreciated.

Your point about the uniform hat seems to be well taken. The records which I have on uniform changes do not show the use of other than black hats until in the nineties as I told you. Since you questioned the point I wrote the Quartermaster General of the Army for definite information and he states that a drab campaign hat was adopted for the Army in June, 1876. This type of hat continued in use through the Spanish-American War period (when it was often turned up at the side as in the pictures of the famous "Teddy" which you mention).

The present type of campaign hat, olive drab in color and with the "Montana" peak, was adopted in 1912. So the movies were possibly right. The use of the black hat seems to have persisted for some time after the adoption of the drab hat, at least among the officers for undress wear.

I am unable to find any definite information about the uniforms worn by the Indian Police. I am under the impression they consisted of coat and trousers of dark blue cloth. In some cases they were probably equipped from surplus Army stocks. I do not think the breeches stripe would have been worn, except perhaps to indicate the higher ranks if at all. However, I have no way of checking this information, but probably if you were to write to the Indian Bureau, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., they would be able to give you full information on this point.

Soya Bean

DELICIOUS either hot or cold by itself, it may also be used to impart a richer flavor to many other foods.

Request:—"Can you give me some information on the soya bean?"

—A. B. C., Otty Glen, N. B., Canada.

Reply, by Mr. Charles B. Emerson:—The soya bean is an Asiatic fabaceous (of the family like the bean) herb with nearly erect hairy stems and trifoliated leaves; also its white globose seed, used for food in China and Japan. The plant is grown for forage in the southern United States.

In China, Manchuria and Japan, the soya bean is an indispensable food of the people. Meat does not enter into the diet of the common people any more than terrapin enters into the diet of the common people of the U. S. A., and they must therefore depend on vegetable protein. The soya bean is the king of all vegetable protein foods. Some contain more than 40 per cent of protein, and from 18 to 20 per cent of fat. It may thus be considered the equivalent to a vegetable meat.

As a matter of fact, the Chinese actually make all kinds of dairy products from the soya bean, such as those derived from the cow—milk, curds, cheese, cream and butter.

Not only is this bean a delicious thing to eat by itself, either hot or cold, but it may be used as a great improver of nearly all other foods, rendering them richer in flavor and nutrition. I am of the opinion that before long the soya bean will become one of the chief crops of North America.

In the South, the soya bean can be raised and can thus supply a suitable food which eventually will largely replace meat. The time may come when there will be a great shortage of meat, and there is no better vegetable substitute than the soya bean.

Milk from the soya bean is now being made in Vienna at one-sixth the cost of fresh milk. It closely resembles cow's milk in proteid, carbohydrate and fat content, as well as in color. Cheese and butter can also be made from the soya bean, and a flour, one part of which equals in nutritive value two

parts of meat and one-third part of wheat flour.

The soya bean originated in Manchuria, where it has a history of some 5000 years. It was introduced into America about the end of the eighteenth century.

Radio

A PROBLEM in wide frequency range.

Request:—"I have had quite a bit of trouble with a Superhet. I have tried to rebuild.

Set works nicely from 486 meters down to 345 meters.

Below 345 meters when set is in resonance it howls and will not bring in anything.

A local station 100 watts 8 miles away comes in very poor on 249 meters.

Am using a B eliminator (Kodel).

Set consists of:

1 stage of untuned radio frequency (Branston).

1st Det.

2 stages of intermediate radio frequency (Hilco made by the A. E. Hill Co., Atlanta, Ga.).

Oscillator (Hilco).

2nd Det.

2 stages of Audio (Bremmer Tully)."

—WILEY BROWN, Fort Thomas, Ky.

Reply, by Mr. Donald McNicol:—About the best I can do for you is suggest where you might look for trouble in your set. The trouble you are having is similar to that of others who do not get wide frequency range in the Superhet. The tuning condenser might be a .00035 instead of a .0005.

I do not know about the turns on the primaries of those R F coils. It is possible they could have a few less turns to advantage.

Presumably you have the grid leads as short as possible. A difficulty that is responsible for much Superhet trouble is poor design; usually the parts are too crowded in cabinets or on baseboards.

State Police

REQUIREMENTS for joining the New York and Pennsylvania forces.

Request:—"Having just been paid off from the U. S. Marine Corps, I would like to get some information on the State Police of Pennsylvania and New York."—A. M. QUINN, Lone Pine, Cal.

Reply, by Mr. Francis H. Bent, Jr.:—Applicant for the Pennsylvania State Police must be a citizen of the U. S.; of good moral character; present three letters of character reference from his home town; be able to ride a horse; be at least 5 feet 6½ inches tall, without shoes; between 20 and 30 years old; and preferably single. Men with military, naval or Marine Corps service are given preference.

Pay is $1200 for first year, increasing regularly up to $1800 for the seventh year. Everything is furnished by the State except the mess, which is furnished by the men on a *pro rata* assessment amounting to about $16.00 per man per month.

The men live in barracks and are subject to call at any time. At certain intervals they are allowed leave. Life is very much like Army life only likely to be more active.

Write to Superintendent of State Police, Harrisburg, Pa., for application blanks.

Applicant for the New York State Police must be a citizen of the U. S., between 21 and 40 years old; at least 5 feet 8 inches tall, without shoes; weigh at least 140 pounds, stripped; show honorable discharge from Army, Navy, Marine Corps or National Guard; be a practical horseman.

Pay for first year is $900. There is an increase each year of $100 up to the fourth year. The State furnishes board, lodging, uniforms, arms and equipment. If a man is disabled in line of duty he receives a pension amounting to not less than one-third pay, and not more than one-half pay. If killed, his dependents receive the same amount.

Living conditions, furloughs, etc., are about the same as stated above for the Pennsylvania State Police.

For application blanks write to the Superintendent, Division of State Police, Executive Department, Albany, New York.

TO THOSE contemplating a fishing trip to Newfoundland, the following copy of the recent Fishery Regulations, sent in by Mr. C. T. James, of this department, will be of interest.

GAME LAWS OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

(*Newfoundland Gazette*)

On recommendation of the Game and Inland Fisheries Board and under the provisions of the Game and Inland Fisheries Act, 1924, His Excellency the Governor in Council has been pleased to order that Section (b) of the Regulations regarding Inland Fishery Licences, gazetted on 10th May, 1927, shall be cancelled and the following substituted therefor, namely:

"(b) That he (the person applying for a Rod Licence) shall pay to the Board or its authorized Agent, the following Fees, namely:—For a licence for the Season, $25.00 and $1.00 additional to the person issuing same. For a licence for two weeks (14 days) $10.00 and 50 cents additional to the person issuing same. For a licence for four days or less, $2.00 per day and ten cents additional for each day covered by the licence to the person issuing same."

—A. BARNES,
Colonial Secretary.

Department of Colonial Secretary,
St. John's, Nfl'd, March 19, 1929.

Regulations of May, 1927, read:

(b) That an applicant for licence shall pay to

the Board or its authorized Agent, the following fees, viz.:

For a licence for the season, $10.00 and fifty cents additional to person issuing same.

For a licence for four days or less, $2.00 per day and ten cents additional for each day covered by the licence to person issuing same.

British Columbia

LOGGING prospects in the Fort Fraser District.

Request:—"I have obtained some information from the Canadian Office at Kansas City. After study of the descriptions of timber country I tentatively picked on the Fort Fraser District in the locality of Vandernoof and Stewart Lake. Can you give me some first hand information on that locality and compare it with the Cariboo District?

I understand the timber could be cut into ties. What I had in mind was somewhat along that line. With your knowledge of the country I should like you to pass judgment on my idea.

I had planned to purchase a small portable sawmill which is operated by a Fordson tractor. The mill is not expensive and I would have the tractor for general farm work. It will produce from 2 to 8 m. per day depending on the size logs, cuts and ability of operator. These mills cutting from one to four hundred ties per day from oak which will seldom make more than one tie.

I propose to cut all my own rough lumber for house and outbuildings. Now, suppose I cut the rest of my timber into rough building material, could I sell it? If so at what approximate price? Or should I cut it into ties? What could I get for them?

Would I be able, in your opinion, to secure work or contracts for cutting lumber or ties for other people?"—FRANK B. ROBINSON, Independence, Mo.

Reply, by Mr. C. Plowden:—Fort Fraser is very cold, as you can see by your map. Cariboo District is mild and has a railway to Vancouver, and that is why I suggest it. You will find plenty of country here wild enough to suit anybody. Nechaco River, near Fort Fraser, has very high and muddy banks and so is difficult for irrigation. The few miles it is north of Cariboo make a lot of difference, and at certain seasons it is desperate with "bugs" of every sort.

The Cariboo District is rapidly settling and your lumber would have a much better market there, I think. Also the P. G. E. Railway is being built to Peace River District, and you should be able to land some good contracts.

Price of ties varies so very much I can not give you price with any certainty. You could also cut cedar shingle bolts for which you can get eight to nine dollars a cord in Vancouver. Local market excellent for lumber.

As Peace River District opens up, you could, with your plant, follow the demand for produce. Your idea really seems to offer great prospects, Another thing is, it would be so much easier to ship it in where I suggest,

Photography

THE COMPLETE technique of photographing butterflies.

Request:—"1. Will one of the cheap sort of cameras do for photographing of butterflies?

2. How shall I mount the butterfly for taking the picture? At what distance from the lens must it be placed to get an exact size picture?

3. Can an inexperienced person color photographs after a little practise?

Anything else along this line you can tell me will be appreciated."

—G. A. MACDONALD, Sacramento, Cal.

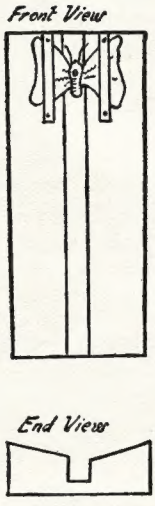
Reply, by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—The cheap cameras will not do for the work you want, since they have not enough bellows draw. To photograph an object life-size, you must extend your bellows until the lens is twice its focal length from the plate, and place the object this same distance from the lens. I would suggest that you get a view camera of the size you need, and one of the cheaper lenses. The only advantage of a high-grade lens over a cheap one is in the speed, and since a mounted butterfly will hold still for an extended time, and since you will have to stop down to get depth of field in any case, a rapid rectilinear lens will be exactly as good for you as the most expensive anastigmat.

Of course, you will get a camera large enough to take the image full size on the plate; this is preferable to making a small negative and enlarging, though you could do the latter, in which case the size of the image wouldn't matter. But contact printing is preferable to enlarging, for three reasons: (1) It is much easier to make platinum prints than bromide enlargements. (2) Platinum paper is far better than bromide if you are going to do coloring. (3) Less machinery is needed for contact printing. If you are going to make photographs in life size of the larger butterflies you will need an 8x10 camera; for the smaller ones, you can use kits in the plate-holders, and small plates.

I would strongly advise using Wratten panchromatic plates and a K 3 filter, or some other equally good panchromatic plate *with a properly adjusted filter*. Don't just take any piece of colored glass that's advertised as a filter, or your results may be worse than without it. Only by using a panchromatic plate and a proper filter can you get correct color values. Of course, you will have to handle these plates in total darkness, but since you will want to develop in a tank, that is of no consequence.

KILL your butterflies in a cyanide jar. Get a piece of potassium cyanide about the size of a hickory nut (this is about the deadliest of the inorganic poisons, so handle it with extreme care) and

put it on the bottom (inside!) of a large-mouthed fruit jar. Pour over it enough plaster of paris, mixed with water to make a thick cream, to cover the cyanide, and when the plaster has hardened you pop your butterfly into the jar and put the cover on. He departs this life very quickly.



When he is thoroughly defunct, but not rigid, take him out, stick a pin through his thorax, pin him to a board as shown in the sketch at right, spread his wings out (work them out with a pin) fasten them with strips of paper pinned across them (don't stick the pins through the wings) and let him dry.

Then for photographing, hang a heavy cloth of suitably contrasting hue on the wall, pin Mr. Butterfly to it, and proceed with the camera. You will find it more convenient to set the camera on a small table which can be slid back and forth than to use a tripod.

You can get water colors from John G. Marshall, 1752 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y., or oil colors from the Japanese Water Color Co., Peerless Building, Rochester, N. Y. I have seen some nice work done with the Polychrome Pencils made by A. W. Faber, Inc., Newark, N. J. I would recommend Willis and Clements platinum paper for printing. Their address is 604 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa. The coloring is not difficult.

Track

THE development of a dash man.

Request:—"I would appreciate it very much if you will inform me as to the best kind of workouts and road work for a 100 yard dash man.—J. C. MCFADDEN, JR., *U. S. S. Florida*, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Reply, by Mr. Jackson Scholz:—Natural speed is essential for the 100 yard dash. Possessing the speed, the best results may be obtained by daily workouts, if possible.

The start is the most important part of the entire race. I would suggest at least four or five starts each day from thirty to forty yards. Some days should be devoted almost entirely to starts with plenty of rest between. Striding at three quarter speed is an excellent conditioner, and, when once in shape, sprint three hundred yards at least twice a week. Never work until you are exhausted. As for myself I usually plan to save enough for an *easy* 220 at the end of each workout. The over distance I have suggested is for the strength required in combination with the speed. Run 100 yards against time twice a week. Road work is no good for a sprinter. Concentrate on your starts.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the first issue of each month

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The next issue of ADVENTURE, July 1st

MOUNTAIN *of the* GODS

A novelette of a hazardous search for a lost aviator in the Upper Orinocan jungle

By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

LOST GOLCONDA

A stirring novelette of a drill fight in the land of the "black gold" gushers

By FOSTER-HARRIS

And—Other Good Stories

THE RANCH ON RED RIVER, a novelette of the West and modern outlawry, by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON; ESCAPE, a powerful tale of the French Penal Colony of Guiana, by ROBERT CARSE; THE SCRIMSHAW, a story of old whaling days, by FREDERICK HOPKINS; THE PROOF, in which a wanderer comes home, by W. C. TUTTLE; A BAD ELEMENT IN FEATHERS, a story of the Louisiana Delta country, by RAYMOND S. SPEARS; OM-DONG, the last episode in the life of Griggs, master of a Java isle, by R. V. GERY; HAMMERED HOME, a story of a cowboy tracker, by S. OMAR BARKER; and *Part II* of MAN OF THE NORTH, a gripping novel of the Northwest Canadian waterways, by JAMES B. HENDRYX.

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Is it Seaforth?

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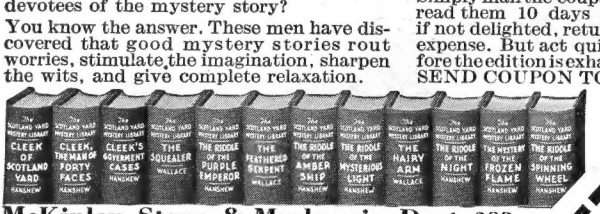
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THE RIDDLE OF THE PURPLE EMPEROR
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THE RIDDLE OF THE AMBER SHIP
THE RIDDLE OF THE MYSTERIOUS LIGHT
THE HAIRY ARM
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THE MYSTERY OF THE FROZEN FLAME
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Is it Major Burnham?

Dept. 303 6-29

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